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# Neither Peasants Nor Frenchmen: Racialization, Immigration, and Industrialization in the Franco-American Community of Manchester, New Hampshire, 1880-1930

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Neither Peasants Nor Frenchmen:  
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in the Franco-American Community  
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Kevin Finefrock  
History Honors Thesis, 2007

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And of course, I am thankful for the French-Canadian immigrants and other individuals who appear among the pages of this thesis. They are the ones who lived through these events and inspired my writing. Most importantly, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my grandfather, Roland Robert Morency (1935-1962), who served as the source for my original interest in French-Canadian genealogy.

- Kevin Finefrock

## **Preface**

Manchester, New Hampshire holds a giant Saint Patrick's Day parade every March. Giant green shamrocks are spray-painted on the pavement along the city's main street, a constant reminder of the Irish presence in the city. In cities all over the United States, similar displays of affection and pride for the Irish are shown.<sup>1</sup>

I began researching my family's genealogy in middle school at the American-Canadian Genealogical Society in Manchester, New Hampshire, and it has always struck me that public displays of Franco-American ethnic identity are largely absent from American society today. I wanted to know why I had grown up speaking only English rather than the English and French that my mother had learned as a child. More importantly, why didn't Manchester celebrate Saint Jean-Baptiste Day with a giant parade and why didn't the city spray-paint a fleur-de-lis along Elm Street every year?<sup>2</sup> After all, Franco-Americans and French-Canadian immigrants had made up about one-third of the city's population in 1890, and nearly forty percent of the city's current population

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<sup>1</sup> New York City has held its famous parade since 1850, but Saint Patrick's Day parades were first witnessed in that city as far back as 1762. Since 1962, the population of Chicago has dyed the Chicago River green on Saint Patrick's Day.

([http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2005/03/0315\\_050315\\_stpatricksdays.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2005/03/0315_050315_stpatricksdays.html))

<sup>2</sup> This final question was asked by Leo J. Cotnoir of Manchester in a New Hampshire Union Leader editorial published Monday, 19 March 2007 on page A9.

listed its ancestry as French-Canadian or French (other than Basque) in the census of 2000.<sup>3</sup>

These questions led directly to the historical study contained within these pages. At first, I was interested in knowing why public acts of Franco-American identity had disappeared in Manchester and why the teaching of that same ethnic identity within local families was eroding. I soon realized, however, that I would have to examine the origins of Franco-American identity before I could analyze what had happened to that identity. In the process, the history of my family and of a people became clearer.

Kevin Finefrock  
Manchester, NH ~ Spring 2007

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<sup>3</sup> For historical population information, see Piotrowski, Thaddeus M., "The Franco-American Heritage in Manchester, New Hampshire" from Albert, Renaud S., compiler, *A Franco-American Overview, Volume I: New England*, (Cambridge MA: National Assessment and Dissemination Center for Bilingual/Bicultural Education, 1981), pp. 219-233.

For 2000 census information, see ancestry statistics for Manchester at ([http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPTable?\\_bm=y&-geo\\_id=16000US3345140&-qr\\_name=ACS\\_2005\\_EST\\_G00\\_DP2&-gc\\_url=&-ds\\_name=ACS\\_2005\\_EST\\_G00\\_-&-lang=en&-redoLog=false](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=16000US3345140&-qr_name=ACS_2005_EST_G00_DP2&-gc_url=&-ds_name=ACS_2005_EST_G00_-&-lang=en&-redoLog=false))



## **Introduction:**

### **The Historical Study of Ethnicity and Immigration**

#### *Ethnic Studies in a Historical Context*

Over time, ethnicity has been called “a cultural phenomenon, a psychological process, symbolic expression, social organization, and most recently, a biological phenomenon.”<sup>4</sup> Some political scientists and sociologists have defined ethnicity as “a subjective perception of common origins, historical memories, ties, and aspirations.”<sup>5</sup> In the context of this thesis, an ethnic group will be defined as a group of people sharing a common culture as well as a sense of common historical memories and heritage. Due to their socially constructed nature, ethnic identities have been described as “imagined” communities.<sup>6</sup> The term “imagined” is not meant to downplay the power of ethnic identities around the globe. For many of those involved in ethnic conflict, these identities feel more real than “imagined.”

Political scientists and sociologists have analyzed case studies of various ethnic populations and pinpointed factors that can influence the saliency of an ethnic identity or the probability that conflict will erupt within a society due to

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<sup>4</sup> Quoting Richard Thompson. Lindenfeld, Jacqueline, *The French in the United States: An Ethnographic Study*, (Westport CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2000), p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Rothchild, Donald, *Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa: Pressures and Incentives for Cooperation*, (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute, 1997), p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> For the origin of this concept, see Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (New York, NY: Verso, 1983). For an application of this idea with regard to France, see Holt, Mack P., ed., *Short Oxford History of France: Renaissance and Reformation France, 1500-1648*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 5.

ethnic tension.<sup>7</sup> At times, however, these studies have neglected the historical origins of these identities. They do not always answer how these ethnic identities developed or why.

For historians, ethnic identity is a difficult concept to investigate. The documents available to historians are often written from the perspective of ethnic elites or governments. Ethnic elites, who typically control ethnic media outlets and leadership positions, and governments almost always define an ethnic identity as “fixed, singular, bounded, internally harmonious, distinct from others at its boundaries and marked by historical longevity, if not rooted in nature.”<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the documents produced by governments and ethnic elites do not always reveal a clear picture of what the general population is feeling directly. So, how does a historian determine a group’s identity or show how that identity changed over time?

Therein lies the major problem with ethnic studies. The historian must examine the various claims made about ethnic identity and determine which is most salient at a particular moment in time. Intra-ethnic fighting, sometimes through the process of outbidding in which members of the ethnic group contest

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<sup>7</sup> See Van Evera, Stephen, “Hypotheses on Nationalism and War” in Brown, Michael E., Owen R. Coté Jr., Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller, eds., *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict: An International Security Reader*, (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2001), pp. 26-60, for an interesting discussion of the various factors that affect the saliency and tendencies of different ethnic identities.

<sup>8</sup> Suny, Ronald Grigor, “Constructing Primordialism in Armenia and Kazakhstan: Old Histories for New Nations,” in Max Paul Friedman and Padraic Kenney, *Partisan Histories: The Past in Contemporary Global Politics*, (New York: Palgrave, 2005).

who really represents the group (i.e. who is more “Irish” or most “French”), is something that historians can easily see through documents related to ethnic elites. Ethnic leaders must gain the support of the ethnic population in order for their definition of the ethnic group to take hold. People often “dispute who they are, argue about boundaries, who is in or out of the group, where the ‘homeland’ begins and ends, what the ‘true’ history of the nation is, what is ‘authentic’ about being national and what is to be rejected.”<sup>9</sup> In essence, group identities are constantly changing. As events take place, both within an ethnic population and outside of it, some members might want to adapt the group’s identity to new conditions, while others might fight to maintain the identity that has always existed. Accounts of historical disputes and new revelations about historical cultures through social history can give the historian a more accurate picture of a group’s aspirations, fears, or demands and how they have changed over time.

*Expanding Horizons: Taking Immigration History to the Next Level*

In United States history, ethnic groups have invariably been linked to immigration studies. The traditional picture of the immigration process presented immigrants settling in America and gradually assimilating to American society, forgetting their homelands as soon as they reached American

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

shores.<sup>10</sup> Over recent decades, in contrast to this pleasant view of immigration, researchers have found that many immigrant populations are in a constant state of flux. Transnationalism, the process in which immigrants maintain close ties to their country of origin, sometimes even returning to the country of origin for an extended period of time, has become a new source of inquiry in immigration studies. For many immigrant populations, it explains the immigration process more accurately than the classical assimilation theory of immigration.

Traditionally, American immigration historians have focused solely on the ethnic group's adaptation to life in America. Within the past decades many historians, most notably the late Professor Frank Thistlethwaite, "challenged American historians to cut through the 'salt water curtain' that checked understanding of [immigration] by analyzing the effects of emigration both on the European communities and on the American settlements."<sup>11</sup> Although the French-Canadians who settled in New England did not cross the salty waters of the Atlantic, this thesis attempts to make good on Thistlethwaite's challenge by examining both the French-Canadian community of Québec and the Franco-American community of Manchester, New Hampshire.

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<sup>10</sup> For more on the "Melting Pot" theory of immigration, see Handlin, Oscar, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made the American People*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> Gjerde, Jon, *From Peasants to Farmers: The Migration from Balestrand, Norway, to the Upper Middle West*, (Cambridge MA: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 1.

### *Organization*

In this thesis, I examine how the processes of racialization, immigration, and industrialization caused the emergence of two divergent definitions of ethnic identity in the French-Canadian community of Québec and the Franco-American community of Manchester, New Hampshire between 1880 and 1930.

Chapter One first provides historical background regarding the origins and development of French-Canadian ethnic identity from the pre-colonial period to the British conquest of 1763.

Chapter Two examines the failure of the liberal Rebellions of 1837 and the conservative French-Canadian nationalism which developed as a result of this failure. It concludes with an evaluation of French-Canadian immigration to the United States in the late-nineteenth century. It also traces the racialization of the French-Canadian and Franco-American communities by both the British and the Americans, specifically the labeling of the Franco-American community as the “Chinese of the Eastern States”, and analyzes the effects of this racialization on French-Canadian and Franco-American identity.

Chapters Three and Four present the breakdown of conservative French-Canadian identity within the Franco-American community of Manchester, New Hampshire during the interwar years of the 1920s. Chapter Three examines the relationship between industrialization, traditional French-Canadian kinship

patterns, and unionization within Manchester's Amoskeag Manufacturing Company. The Franco-American community's reaction to the Amoskeag Strike of 1922 provides a clear picture of the emerging Franco-American identity of the time.

Chapter Four explores the tension that developed over the role of faith and language in Franco-American society during the twenties. An examination of the Sentinelle Affair (1924 – 1929) in which the Franco-American community in New England was divided over how to respond to the Irish Catholic hierarchy's insistence that Catholic Church services be held in the English language sheds light on the erosion of traditional French-Canadian identity within Franco-American society.

The Conclusion discusses how the turbulence of America's interwar years produced two unique ethnic identities: one French Canadian, the other Franco-American. It also examines the role of race within both communities and puts forward some observations on current immigration debates within American society.

#### *A Note on Terms*

Since this study deals with three hundred years of migration and the consequent changes of identity that have taken place throughout the process, some explanation of terminology is required. In this study, "French" refers to

individuals who lived in France or the first-generation migrants who traveled from France to Canada. “French-Canadian” refers to individuals of French ancestry born in Canada or first-generation migrants who traveled from Canada to the United States. Franco-Americans are those individuals of French-Canadian ancestry born in the United States.<sup>12</sup>

“French-speaking” could refer to a member of any of these three groups and is often used in juxtaposition with the “English-speaking” populations of Canada and America.

I have used the term “Native” to refer to indigenous populations unless a specific linguistic or tribal association is indicated.

The terms used to describe other populations (Irish, British, Acadian) are either self-explanatory or defined clearly within the text.

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<sup>12</sup> A good discussion of the differences between Franco-Americans of French-Canadian ancestry and the French-Americans who have migrated from France to the United States in recent decades can be found in Lindenfeld, Jacqueline, *The French in the United States: An Ethnographic Study*, p. 9.

# 1

## **Historical Background**

The liberal French-Canadian nationalism of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century was influenced by centuries of historical experience. Any examination of Franco-American identity must, therefore, begin at its source: *Ancien Régime* France. Historians can trace the development of this original French identity as it traveled with the immigrant population from France to New France in the colonial period. As the French-Canadian population adapted to its new environment, their original French identity also had to be altered in order to fit the new social, economic and political order of the day. Under a century of French colonial government, this identity prospered. The British Conquest of 1763 changed the power structure in Canada forever, and the French-Canadian identity once again adjusted.

### **France**

#### *Forging a Nation*

Throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the constant state of war in Western Europe severely hampered the ability of the French monarchy to centralize its control over French territory. The end of the Hundred Years' War in 1453 finally allowed the French monarchy to turn its attention to the



consolidation of its holdings and the expansion of its territory.<sup>13</sup> The monarchy



attempted to propagandize its own divinity by emphasizing ritual and ceremony, specifically the king's claimed ability to heal the sick.<sup>14</sup> It also consolidated its control over the Catholic Church in 1516 with the Concordat of Bologna, which gave the French king the right to name bishops and other Church personnel within his territory.<sup>15</sup> During this period, French gradually came to replace vernacular languages among

local elites and was acknowledged as the state language. Even so, regional dialects were still extremely common among the general population.<sup>16</sup>

Though the French monarchy was able to further its control over French territory after the Hundred Years' War, the French Wars of Religion erupted in

<sup>13</sup> Holt, Mack P., ed., *Short Oxford History of France: Renaissance and Reformation France, 1500-1648*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 6-7.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 8-9.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 16 and Lough, John, *An Introduction to Seventeenth Century France*, (New York, NY: David McKay Company Inc., 1969), p. 90.

<sup>16</sup> In 1539, a Royal Ordinance was passed requiring all legal business to be conducted in French rather than in Latin. This was part of the monarchy's attempt to wrest power from the Catholic Church within its territory (Holt, Mack P., ed., *Short Oxford History of France: Renaissance and Reformation France, 1500-1648*, p. 13, 53, 61).

1562. The wars pitted French Protestants, known as Huguenots, against French Catholics. During the wars, two divergent definitions of the French nation emerged and the idea of the divine monarchy came under attack.<sup>17</sup> The first form of French nationalism centered upon the Catholic faith and the king. Its proponents argued that the Catholic Church, not scripture, was the Biblical authority and that the local parish and sacraments were the center of religious life.<sup>18</sup> The other French nationalism allowed for the possibility of non-Catholics to join the nation. The wars ended in 1598 with the Edict of Nantes, in which Henry IV guaranteed French Huguenots the right to worship freely.<sup>19</sup> Henry's reign, from 1589 until his assassination in 1610, was marked by coexistence between Protestants and Catholics within France, political alliances with Protestant nations to the North and East of France, and an expanding economy.<sup>20</sup> Henry's son, Louis XIII, and grandson, Louis XIV, with the aid of influential ministers like Cardinal Richelieu and Jules Mazarin, would rule the country until 1717 and continue to centralize the power of the French Bourbon line, defeating many of those who would attempt to overthrow them.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 23, 230.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>19</sup> Lough, John, *An Introduction to Seventeenth Century France*, p. 110.

<sup>20</sup> Ladurie, Emmanuel Le Roy, Mark Greengrass, trans., *The Ancien Régime: A History of France 1610-1774*, (Cambridge MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p.3.

<sup>21</sup> Lough, John, *An Introduction to Seventeenth Century France*, Chapter 5, and Ladurie, Emmanuel Le Roy, Mark Greengrass, trans., *The Ancien Régime: A History of France 1610-1774*.

While the political events of the fifteenth and sixteenth century might seem disconnected from the social identity of the French peasants who had no control over their direction, the conclusion of the Hundred Years' War and the Wars of Religion in France significantly impacted the idea of the French nation and its people. The monarchy was able to consolidate its rule over an ever-expanding territory and began to unite the people living in those regions under a common identity.<sup>22</sup> This imagined community of uniquely "French" individuals also allowed the monarchy to support the colonization of New France. More importantly to those who migrated to the Americas, however, were the social and economic situations within France at the time.

### *Social Life in Ancien Regime France*

Politically, religiously, socially, and economically, Ancien Regime France was a hierarchical society.<sup>23</sup> The era has been described as

"a conglomeration of mostly centuries-old, sometimes thousand-year old elements, none of which was ever discarded... [It was] like an immense, turbid river carrying dead hulks of trees, rank weeds torn from its banks, and living organisms of all ages and sizes; without significant loss, it ... collected the great rivers of the Middle Ages and the streams of barbarian times and even of the Roman Empire (whose laws it constantly invokes). The triple division of the 'orders' of the state may derive from an even more distant Indo-European source, as Georges Dumézil has come close to proving."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See Weber, Eugen, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France 1870-1914*, (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1976) for an argument about the continued prominence of regional identities at the time.

<sup>23</sup> Lough, John, *An Introduction to Seventeenth Century France*, p. xxiii.

<sup>24</sup> From French historian Pierre Goubert (Goubert, Pierre, Steve Cox, trans., *The Ancien Régime: French Society 1600-1750*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p.17).

### *A Rural Existence*

Most of the individuals living in France during the Ancien Regime were rural peasants who practiced rudimentary agriculture. Between 85% and 90% of the population of Ancien Regime France lived in small villages or the countryside and 80% could be considered part of the peasantry.<sup>25</sup> These individuals typically lived a sedentary life due to the poor quality of transportation during the era. Most individuals who did travel were forced to use waterways or poor roadways and it was often expensive and unsafe. The lack of easy transportation also resulted in the flow of poor or inaccurate communication. Astrology was widely believed, and it has been estimated that even by 1685, 78.7% of the population was illiterate.<sup>26</sup> While some individuals were able to learn cursive writing, Latin and numbers for utilitarian purposes, most were unaware of the cultural life sprouting in France's urban centers, specifically at the French court.

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25 Goubert states that 85% of the population was rural, while Holt argues that 90% lived in villages. 80% could be included in the peasantry. (Ibid., p. 42-44, 53, 58-61). Holt, Mack P., ed., *Short Oxford History of France: Renaissance and Reformation France, 1500-1648*, p. 27, 37.

26 Choquette argues that most Frenchmen lived within a 20 km radius their entire lives (Choquette, Leslie, *Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p.182); Goubert, Pierre, Steve Cox, trans., *The Ancien Régime: French Society 1600-1750*, p. 262-272; and Maland, David, *Culture and Society in Seventeenth-Century France*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), p. 11.

Most peasants made their living through agriculture, raising vegetable and animal products.<sup>27</sup> The agricultural technology used by the society had not advanced for decades. Wealth was determined by the amount of crop produced by a family and the crops were usually used for bartering, as money was not in widespread use. Farmers organized themselves into agricultural assemblies, whose boundaries were sometimes equivalent to the local parish community.

### *Seigneurs and Nobles*

While there were some peasants who had enough wealth to maintain independence, most relied upon a semi-feudal system in which they were dependent upon a *seigneur*, or man of rank, in their region.<sup>28</sup> Some of these seigneurs were part of the nobility who could trace their lineage back to past French kings, while others were wealthy individuals whom the king had ennobled. *Seigneuries*, the territory which the seigneurs controlled, could be bought if one had enough money. The seigneur lived on what was called the *domaine*, where his large home was located, and oversaw the *censives*, or peasant

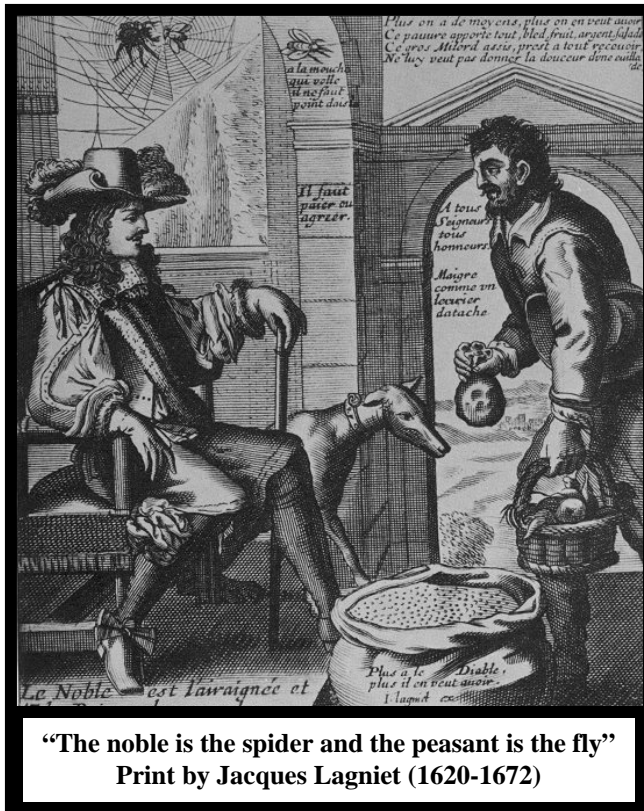
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27 Goubert, Pierre, Steve Cox, trans., *The Ancien Régime: French Society 1600-1750*, p. 53-54, 64; Lough, John, *An Introduction to Seventeenth Century France*, p. xix; and Holt, Mack P., ed., *Short Oxford History of France: Renaissance and Reformation France, 1500-1648*, p. 62, 71.

28 Goubert, Pierre, Steve Cox, trans., *The Ancien Régime: French Society 1600-1750*, p. 5, 82-84, 109-113, 126, 128, 160, 179 and Lough, John, *An Introduction to Seventeenth Century France*, p. xix, xxi and Chapters 1 and 3. Holt, Mack P., ed., *Short Oxford History of France: Renaissance and Reformation France, 1500-1648*, Chapter 2 for a discussion of the Feudal System.

land. This land sometimes lined up with the boundaries of cultivated land known as the *terroir* from which the agricultural assemblies were organized.<sup>29</sup>

The peasant life was fraught with dangers, especially from disease or



environmental factors that could harm crop production. Peasants paid the seigneur a rent for the use of both the land and property. The state also taxed its citizens through the *taille*, from which the clergy and nobility were often exempt. All of these taxes served to maintain the subordinate position of the peasant

population. The seigneur also had the power to appoint individuals within his land to local offices, to determine judicial action in the region through leadership of the village tribunal, and to demand that peasants within his territory billeted troops.

The feudal order recognized three different social groups, or estates, in French society. The peasants, also called commoners or *roturiers*, the nobility,

<sup>29</sup> Goubert, Pierre, Steve Cox, trans., *The Ancien Régime: French Society 1600-1750*, p. 78-79.

and the clergy were all expected to follow different social codes. As the monarchy centralized power in the Ancien Regime, the nobility began to drift into impoverishment. At the same time, new ideas, like those professed by Claude de Seyssel, a cleric and noble, advocated a more fluid definition of society and a hierarchy based on wealth instead of bloodline. Many nobles and clergy members, however, were content with the peasants' position as "the beast of burden of this society."<sup>30</sup>

### *The Catholic Church and the Parish Life*

As the power of the nobility waned, the Roman Catholic Church maintained much of its influence throughout the French state, consolidating its land to become the wealthiest body in France.<sup>31</sup> From 1600-1640 France underwent a period of religious fervor with new monastic orders being created and the Counter-Reformation in full swing. Much of the faith was conducted in a public manner and the main local administrative unit, the parish, came to dominate local life.

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30 "Le paysan est la bête de somme de cette société." From Lough, John, *An Introduction to Seventeenth Century France*, p. 26.

31 Ibid., Chapter 4 and Holt, Mack P., ed., *Short Oxford History of France: Renaissance and Reformation France, 1500-1648*, Chapter 5.

The Church, like French society in general, was hierarchical in its structure.<sup>32</sup> It collected a tax, or tithe, called the *dîme* from its parishioners. The tithe was collected through the fiscal parish unit or *collecte*. Much of the money was sent upward into the hierarchy, to bishops or other leaders in the clergy who were often younger sons of the nobility. Sometimes only a small amount of revenue ever returned to the parish.<sup>33</sup> Once again, these taxes served to maintain the peasants' subservient condition within Ancien Regime society.

Each parish was run by a *curé*, or priest, and the *fabrique*, or parish council made up of parishioners who acted in an oversight capacity. Since the legal basis for existence within the state was baptism, the Church exerted control over many aspects of local peasant life. Most higher education within the French state was run by monastic orders, namely the Jesuits. Consequently, for many individuals of the Catholic faith, French national and ethnic identity became linked to Catholicism.

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32 Lough, John, *An Introduction to Seventeenth Century France*, Chapter 4 and Goubert, Pierre, Steve Cox, trans., *The Ancien Régime: French Society 1600-1750*, p. 89-90, 122. For a discussion of the Church on the local level in France, see Holt, Mack P., ed., *Short Oxford History of France: Renaissance and Reformation France, 1500-1648*, Chapters 2 and 5.

33 Lough, John, *An Introduction to Seventeenth Century France*, p. 99-100.



*Gender Roles in the Ancien Regime*

The main kinship unit in the Ancien Regime was the conjugal family.<sup>34</sup> It, like the state and the church, was authoritarian, hierarchical, and patriarchal. While they were powerless in the public sphere, women made important economic and social contributions to the private sphere at home. Some noble women were given the responsibility not only of running the household, but also managing its finances when their husbands were away. A woman was expected to support the work of her husband and to remain chaste until marriage as her honor was closely linked to her sexuality.

Ancien Regime France did provide some women with limited opportunities for independence that were not available in neighboring Protestant England. Rather than be forced into marriage or life-long dependence as a single woman, a French woman might choose to enter a nunnery. While Protestant women were granted limited “independence” through reading the Bible, French Catholic women gained some degree of independence through the running of the institution of the nunnery and the educational opportunities available there. This independence, however, was limited to a small number of women, often younger daughters of the nobility. Nunneries were often extremely restrictive for women who were not able to climb the ranks of leadership and some parents

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34 Holt, Mack P., ed., *Short Oxford History of France: Renaissance and Reformation France, 1500-1648*, Chapter 4 on Family and Women and Goubert, Pierre, Steve Cox, trans., *The Ancien Régime: French Society 1600-1750*, p. 92.

forced their younger daughters to join so that dowry expenses could be avoided.<sup>35</sup>

*Trading Society: Towns in the Ancien Regime*

In the late sixteenth century, a massive migration occurred from the French countryside to French cities. This movement corresponded with a shift in France's center of trade to the Atlantic.<sup>36</sup> While the frequent wars of the period damaged the French economy, the use of coined money became more widespread. The economy became market driven and the "capitalist spirit" spread throughout the country.

Social life in Ancien Regime towns consequently began to diverge from that of the countryside.<sup>37</sup> The town and country were still interdependent, but a new class of people emerged by 1600. The middle class, who benefited from the spread of trade, capital and wealth, developed a social structure in France's towns that was even more hierarchical than the one that existed in the countryside. Urban oligarchies developed and guilds came to control many of

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35 Lough, John, *An Introduction to Seventeenth Century France*, p. 98.

36 Choquette, Leslie, *Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada*, Chapters 7, 8, and 9 for traditions of migration and seamanship, especially in Northwestern France (p. 200). Also see Holt, Mack P., ed., *Short Oxford History of France: Renaissance and Reformation France, 1500-1648*, p. 36 and Chapter 3 and Lough, John, *An Introduction to Seventeenth Century France*, Chapter 2.

37 Lough, John, *An Introduction to Seventeenth Century France*, p. xx and 107 and Chapter 2 and Goubert, Pierre, Steve Cox, trans., *The Ancien Régime: French Society 1600-1750*, p. 211-222.

the occupations. Positions of power within the guilds became almost hereditary in some locations.

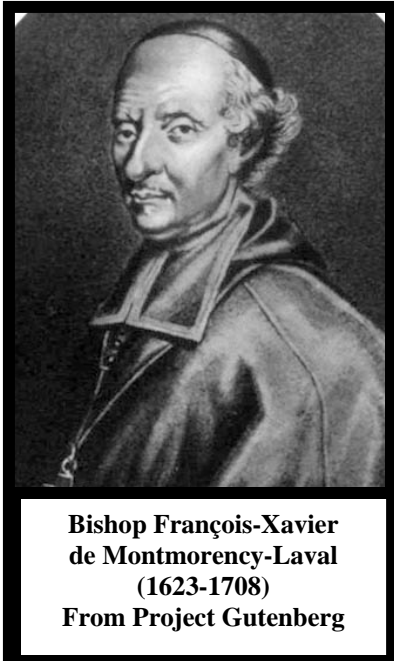
In the early sixteenth century, recognizing the increasing wealth of the middle class, the monarchy turned to them for revenue. Many of these wealthy traders and merchants desired to enter the aristocracy in exchange for their support. Tension developed when the monarchy agreed to ennoble some of these merchants. The old nobility, known as the *noblesse d'épée*, came to hate the *noblesse de robe*, who had gained their power through holding provincial offices. Dependent classes, often illiterate and impoverished, also existed within the towns. As a result of these changes within France's social fabric, some French men and women looked to France's new colonial foothold in North America for opportunities to improve their economic position within French society.

### **La Nouvelle-France**

#### *From French to French-Canadian*

The French first settled along the Saint-Lawrence River, without much success, during the reign of Henry IV. Samuel de Champlain founded Québec near the Iroquois village of Stadacona in 1608. The colony of Acadia, centered at Port-Royal in Abenaki (Algonquin) territory, was settled shortly thereafter in

1611. The Company of New France, also known as the Hundred Associates, was in charge of administrating the colony at its beginning.<sup>38</sup>



The first Jesuits arrived in the colony in 1625, working among the Native population and serving as a source of education for the original European community. Although the first European child was born in the colony in 1627, the population remained small due to a lack of women. By 1635, there were only two hundred Europeans in the colony. Strong ties were made with the native Algonquin tribes

through the fur trade and an alliance against the Iroquois was undertaken.<sup>39</sup>

The colony contained between two thousand to three thousand individuals when it was made a Royal Colony by King Louis XIV in 1663, the twentieth year of his reign. It was administered by nobles, specifically the Governor, who was in charge of military and executive affairs, and the Intendant, who ran the colony's financial and judicial practices.<sup>40</sup> Bishop

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38 For more on the Founding of French-Canada, consult See, Scott W., *The History of Canada*, (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), p. 31-34 and Fitzmaurice, John, *Québec and Canada: Past, Present and Future*, (New York NY: St. Martin's Press, 1985), Chapter 2.

39 See, Scott W., *The History of Canada*, p. 34-37 and Fitzmaurice, John, *Québec and Canada: Past, Present and Future*, Chapter 2. For a discussion of the impact of the Native population on European settlement along the Saint-Lawrence including cultural exchange, mixed food ways and mixed-race individuals, see Greer, Allan, *The People of New France*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 6, 108.

40 Greer, Allan, *The People of New France*, p. 44.

François-Xavier de Montmorency-Laval, who created the colony's parish school system, was also chosen and sent by the king. The French state first offered indentured servitude to men who might travel to North America, but this image later made it difficult to recruit new colonists because the French who remained in Europe began to associate New France with indentured servitude.<sup>41</sup> King Louis XIV attempted to jump start the population after taking control, resulting in nearly thirty thousand immigrants moving to New France throughout the colonial period, including many single women called the "Filles du Roi" or Daughters of the King. The French state directly financed these women and offered supplies and clothing for the trip. Seven thousand colonists traveled to Acadia as well.<sup>42</sup> Along with the state, merchants and seigneurs recruited immigrants in France.<sup>43</sup> It is estimated that most of the French-Canadian population today is descended from about 8,527 of these immigrants who constituted the colony's larger founding families.<sup>44</sup> Immigration slowed once

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41 Ibid., p. 13-14.

42 Fitzmaurice argues there were 2,000 inhabitants in 1665, while See estimates 3,000 in 1663 (Fitzmaurice, John, *Québec and Canada: Past, Present and Future*, p.2 and See, Scott W., *The History of Canada*, p. 38-41). Choquette states that 30,000 individuals arrived throughout the entire period. (Choquette, Leslie, *Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada*, p. 2). Greer's projections are slightly lower at about 27,000 (Greer, Allan, *The People of New France*, p. 12). Reid states that there are about 4,600 Natives and about 2,000 colonists in Acadia in 1710 (Reid, John G., Maurice Basque, Elizabeth Mancke, Barry Moody, Geoffrey Plank, and William Wicken, *The 'Conquest' of Acadia, 1710: Imperial, Colonial, and Aboriginal Constructions*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004)). For a discussion of the *Filles du roi* see Greer, Allan, *The People of New France*, p. 16.

43 Choquette, Leslie, *Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada*, Chapter 10.

44 Ibid., p. 20 and Greer, Allan, *The People of New France*, p. 16.

again as the French state began to worry about growing competition from the colony and the recruitment drive trickled to a halt.

There is some dispute over the origins of the original French migrants to New France. Some have argued that they came from the lower orders of French society.<sup>45</sup> Social historian, Leslie Choquette, challenges this view. She argues effectively that nearly two-thirds of the population came from urban settings, especially the women of the colony. Her study suggests that the French migrants to New France were actually more urban than most of the French population. Those whose previous occupations can be traced corroborate these findings, as most are urban occupations. Many of these artisans came from a background which was more mobile than the typical French peasant.<sup>46</sup> The migrants were from areas involved in economic and social modernization.<sup>47</sup> In some rural areas of France, cultural expectations prevented women from even considering migrating.<sup>48</sup>

Most of these immigrants lived longer and were healthier than peasants in France at the time and most were young adults looking for adventure or

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45 See argues that these migrants are from the “lower orders” (See, Scott W., *The History of Canada*, p. 42).

46 Choquette, Leslie, *Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada*, Chapters 1 and 4.

47 Ibid., Chapter 2.

48 Ibid., Chapter 3.

economic advantage.<sup>49</sup> The healthiness of this population may be linked to their privileged economic status. Social norms within the middle classes were changing and bathing had been commonplace within some urban communities from Roman times.

The issue of language seemed not to have been much of a problem for the immigrants. Although they were from various regions of France, they were able to understand one another and adapted quickly to the official French language.<sup>50</sup> A unique dialect did begin to form, however, as many provincial words made their way into the linguistic population.<sup>51</sup>

Numerous European wars affected the colony throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Treaty of Ryswick in 1697 effectively ended King William's War between England and France in North America and solidified France's claims over Acadia, New France, and the Hudson Bay.<sup>52</sup> Sixteen years later, however, the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 signaled the end of both Queen Anne's War and France's claims on the Hudson Bay and the French-speaking population at Acadia.<sup>53</sup>

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49 Nearly 51.4% of the population studied by Choquette were in their mid-twenties (Ibid., Chapter 6); Consult See, Scott W., *The History of Canada*, p. 43 for a discussion of the immigrants' health.

50 Bell, David A., *The Cult of the Nation in France, Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 178-179.

51 Rioux, Marcel, *Les Québécois*, (Paris: Seuil, 1974), p. 25.

52 Fitzmaurice, John, *Québec and Canada: Past, Present and Future*, p. 3.

53 Ibid., p. 4 and See, Scott W., *The History of Canada*, p. 50.

*The Old Regime in New France*

The French immigrants implemented many of the social practices of Ancien Regime France in their new colony, sometimes in a slightly altered form.<sup>54</sup> The seigneurial system followed the French immigrants to New France, but the tithes and rents collected by the seigneurs were greatly reduced.<sup>55</sup> It was difficult at first for many of the seigneurs, who maintained close connections to the French metropole, to adapt to the social isolation of New France and consequently the system had a difficult time taking hold.<sup>56</sup> Some *habitants*, or peasants, were able to gain access to the system and become seigneurs.<sup>57</sup>

The Church continued to play an important role in New France. The parish and the local priest, or *curé*, remained the center of village life.<sup>58</sup> Unlike the priesthood in France, many priests in Canada did not come from the nobility, decreasing the distance between the priesthood and the local population.<sup>59</sup> The immigrants were also not as submissive or deferential to hierarchy as their

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54 Fitzmaurice, John, *Québec and Canada: Past, Present and Future*, p. 6

55 Greer argues that the ability to own land made the inhabitants of New France freer than those of France (Greer, Allan, *The People of New France*, p. 39-40). Fitzmaurice, John, *Québec and Canada: Past, Present and Future*, p. 2; See, Scott W., *The History of Canada*, p. 43; and Choquette, Leslie, *Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada*, p. 284.

56 Costain describes the seigneurs of Québec as "miserably poor" (Costain, Thomas B., *The White and the Gold: The French Regime in Canada*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company Inc., 1954), p. 375-377). Reid discusses their connections to Old France in detail. (Reid, John G., Maurice Basque, Elizabeth Mancke, Barry Moody, Geoffrey Plank, and William Wicken, *The 'Conquest' of Acadia, 1710: Imperial, Colonial, and Aboriginal Constructions*, p. 45).

57 Rioux, Marcel, *Les Québécois*, p. 40.

58 Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*. Unpublished Dissertation for Ph.D., Graduate School of State University of New York at Buffalo, September 1975, p.12; Rioux, Marcel, *Les Québécois*, p. 38; Fitzmaurice, John, *Québec and Canada: Past, Present and Future*, p. 4; and Greer, Allan, *The People of New France*, p. 35.

59 Rioux, Marcel, *Les Québécois*, p. 38.



brothers and sisters in Europe, especially after the Royal takeover of the colony when the concept of Gallicanism was re-established. Many French administrators complained of the independence of the French-Canadian population, who refused to pay the tithe.<sup>60</sup> The remoteness of New France and the dependence upon agriculture and trade made it difficult for many of the colony's authority figures to enforce their will or their rights under French law. Moreover, about 300 Protestants and a few Jews also lived among the population either openly or in secret.<sup>61</sup>

Agriculture still predominated the economic life of the average habitant. Unlike the agricultural assemblies of Ancien Regime France, agriculture in New France was performed on an individual or familial basis.<sup>62</sup> Soon a merchant elite emerged in New France as it had in France's towns during the Ancien Regime. This elite class, with strong connections to the French crown, did not always agree with the Catholic Church in the colony. There are numerous examples of anticlericalism in France's court records, especially among the merchant classes. One woman stated in her trial that the priest "was not worthy to say mass and

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60 Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*, p. 12-13; Fitzmaurice, John, *Québec and Canada: Past, Present and Future*, p. 7; and Choquette, Leslie, *Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada*, p. 281.

61 Choquette, Leslie, *Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada*, Chapter 5.

62 Greer argues that 80% of the population of New France was involved in agriculture (Greer, Allan, *The People of New France*, p. 26); Choquette, Leslie, *Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada*, p. 284.

that he committed so much sacrilege, being in mortal sin, that she threatened to beat him like a dog and tear his robe.”<sup>63</sup> A rural merchant class also developed, linking the rural habitants and their produce to New France’s urban centers.<sup>64</sup> Tension with the Church resulted in the excommunication of almost the entire merchant population by Bishop Laval in 1663 as New France was becoming a Royal Colony.<sup>65</sup>

The success of New France’s economy caused both joy and concern for the French monarchy, which viewed the territory in terms of mercantilism. Both Acadians and colonists in New France shared a sense of individualism, geographical mobility, and a focus on commercial economy.<sup>66</sup> Fear of competition between New France and Old France caused a reaction from the French in Europe. The government made it more difficult for New France’s habitants and merchants to export their goods, eventually causing the habitants to transform their outlook toward subsistence farming as the merchants turned more toward the fur trade. As social historian Louise Dechene states, “It looks as though the colonists, from the first decade of the eighteenth century, had given up producing above their needs and the urban demand that they could

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63 Choquette, Leslie, *Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada*, p. 144.

64 Ibid., p. 286.

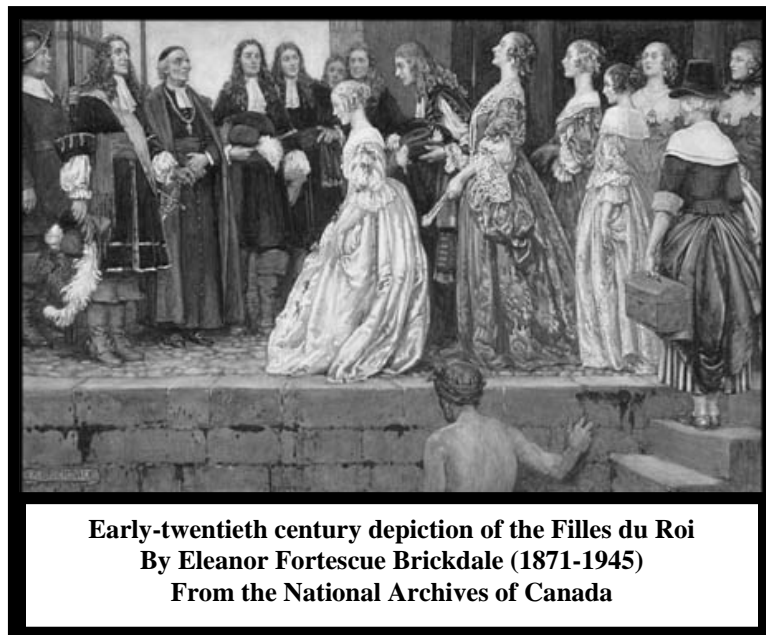
65 Ibid., p. 146 and Greer, Allan, *The People of New France*, p. 3 for a description of the artisinal/trade/market life in New France.

66 Reid et al argue that the early ventures of the migrants to New France were largely commercial (Reid, John G., Maurice Basque, Elizabeth Mancke, Barry Moody, Geoffrey Plank, and William Wicken, *The ‘Conquest’ of Acadia, 1710: Imperial, Colonial, and Aboriginal Constructions*, p. 30).

immediately count on.”<sup>67</sup> This caused a dual economy in which “the colonial elite linked to Atlantic commerce and culture,” while “the habitant himself, [lived] in much more intimate relation to the territory.”<sup>68</sup>

Women played an essential role in both sectors of this dual economy. From its foundation, New France had a limited number of eligible French

women. There were nearly six French men for every French woman, which served to the woman’s advantage.<sup>69</sup> Women were still subject to the centuries-old



patriarchal system of the colony that had arrived with the immigrants from France.<sup>70</sup> Even so, they were needed in order to produce and educate large families, the members of which served as an agricultural and trading labor force within the colony.<sup>71</sup> Natural growth quickly outpaced immigration within the

67 Choquette, Leslie, *Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada*, p. 283.

68 Ibid., p. 284.

69 Most of the original immigrants to New France were poor men (Greer, Allan, *The People of New France*, p. 15-16).

70 Greer, Allan, *The People of New France*, p. 61 for the philosophy of French patriarchy.

71 Ibid., p.22 and Chapter 4 for a discussion of gender in New France.

colony. One example of the fecundity of the French-Canadians is provided by the story of Guillemette Hébert whose death in 1684 was witnessed by over 143 descendants. The family increased to almost seven hundred by 1730.<sup>72</sup> Legally, married women in New France had more power than those who lived in the English colonies. While the English viewed marriage as subjugating the female identity beneath the male's identity, French legal customs in New France viewed both man and woman, while living, as equal members of the joining, what they termed the 'marital community.'<sup>73</sup>

Many individuals in France were shocked by the independence of French-Canadian women, especially those who entered religious orders. Some even went so far as to label them "Amazons of the great God" due to their zealotry with regard to the Native population.<sup>74</sup> Although French legal custom protected the equality of men and women in marriage and French-Canadian religious women wielded some power within French-Canadian society in North America, social practices between the sexes were still maintained in a hierarchical manner. This practice can be seen through the attempts of French-speaking priests to

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>74</sup> "Ces Amazones du grand Dieu" (Choquette, Leslie, *Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada*, p. 147)

diminish the traditional power of Native women by teaching Native men that the male gender was superior.<sup>75</sup>

New France was also a more racially-diverse place than Old France. There were about four thousand slaves present in the colony, most coming from British colonies or the French West-Indies to work as domestic servants.<sup>76</sup> With regard to the Native population, the government in France was more interested in increasing the population and maintaining the fur trade than issues of racial purity.<sup>77</sup> While they viewed themselves as teachers and authority figures when it came to civilization, French imperial theory differed from that employed by the English. It was decided by French authorities that any Natives who joined the Catholic faith would “be considered and reputed native French.”<sup>78</sup> One of Louis XIV’s French ministers, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, even called on the French immigrants to intermarry with Natives, arguing that “in the course of time, having but one law and one master, they may likewise constitute one people and one race.”<sup>79</sup> Unlike the British, who set up strict boundaries between immigrants and Natives, the French allowed for more fluid interactions, possibly due to their

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75 Greer, Allan, *The People of New France*, p. 63.

76 See, Scott W., *The History of Canada*, p. 47. Greer, Allan, *The People of New France*, p. 87-88 provides a good discussion of slavery in the colony. Some whites in the population were treated in a similar manner as the black population who served as domestics. New France had a more fluid definition of freedom than the free=white/unfree=black conception of the British colonies.

77 Ladurie, Emmanuel Le Roy, Mark Greengrass, trans., *The Ancien Régime: A History of France 1610-1774*, p.145.

78 Bell, David A., *The Cult of the Nation in France, Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800*, p. 96.

79 Ibid., p. 96.

much smaller numbers.<sup>80</sup> They also did not assume that the Native population would be incapable of certain civilized behaviors.<sup>81</sup> The French government did link Catholicism and civilization, however, leading to its hands-off approach to French missionaries who continued their work to convert the Native population.

### *The Conquest*

Due to the success of governmental efforts at colonization, the French-Canadian population numbered 50,000 by 1750, but they were still outnumbered nearly twenty to one by the

one million English colonists to their south.<sup>82</sup> The outbreak of the French and Indian War in 1754 spelled disaster for all French-speaking peoples in both New France and Acadia.

In 1755, the British forcibly



*A View of the Taking of Quebec by the English Forces Commanded by Gen. Wolfe, Sep 13, 1759*  
*London Magazine, 1760* © BETTMANN/CORBIS.

removed the Acadian population and scattered them throughout Britain's colonies, including the Thirteen American colonies. This first group of French-

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>81</sup> Greer, Allan, *The People of New France*, p. 83 has a great discussion on French views of race in this period.

<sup>82</sup> See, Scott W., *The History of Canada*, p. 49. Fitzmaurice argues that New France has 60,000 inhabitants, while the English colonies have 1,250,000 (Fitzmaurice, John, *Québec and Canada: Past, Present and Future*).

Canadians to move into the territory that would one day become the United States faced oppression and exclusion upon their arrival.<sup>83</sup>

France's final capitulation greatly affected French-Canadians.<sup>84</sup> At the time of the Conquest in 1763, there were about seventy thousand French-Canadian citizens.<sup>85</sup> The Proclamation of 1763 stipulated that no Roman Catholics would be able to hold office within the territories once belonging to New France, essentially barring the French-Canadians from political participation, although it did promise popular representation.<sup>86</sup> Throughout the colony, there was a sense of defeat and abandonment by France.<sup>87</sup>

In 1774, the British government passed the Quebec Act, which protected the French system of religion, seigneurial land, civil law, and language. It effectively allowed French-Canadians to participate in the governing of their

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83 For information on the Acadian Expulsion- See, Scott W., *The History of Canada*, p. 53 and Fitzmaurice, John, *Québec and Canada: Past, Present and Future*, p. 4. Also, Reid, John G., Maurice Basque, Elizabeth Mancke, Barry Moody, Geoffrey Plank, and William Wicken, *The 'Conquest' of Acadia, 1710: Imperial, Colonial, and Aboriginal Constructions*.

84 Sorrell argues that "Conquest may constitute as powerful a force in a people's experience as revolution." (Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*, p. 12-13). Also see Fitzmaurice, John, *Québec and Canada: Past, Present and Future*, p.14. Similarly, Reid states that "The Acadians realized that they were powerless to control their future, which was unfolding elsewhere. Frequent raids confirmed and reinforced the attitude of accommodation which they developed and applied with regard to both the French and the English." (Reid, John G., Maurice Basque, Elizabeth Mancke, Barry Moody, Geoffrey Plank, and William Wicken, *The 'Conquest' of Acadia, 1710: Imperial, Colonial, and Aboriginal Constructions*, p.48). Greer, however, argues that the effects of the Conquest were minimal except for the direct effects of warfare and destruction (Greer, Allan, *The People of New France*, p. 116-117). I would argue that the Conquest did affect the French-Canadians psychologically. This concept is not just the result of national myths from 1860s Québec.

85 See, Scott W., *The History of Canada*, p. 54.

86 Ibid., p. 59 and Fitzmaurice, John, *Québec and Canada: Past, Present and Future*, p. 11.

87 See, Scott W., *The History of Canada*, p. 56.

territory again, regardless of their Roman Catholic faith.<sup>88</sup> The Catholic Church emerged from the period of the Conquest in a much stronger position than either the seigneurs or the administrative elites of New France. In fact, in order to secure its own survival, the Church showed support for the British during the American Revolutionary War, much to the ire of many of the French-speakers in the region.<sup>89</sup> A rift formed between the upper clergy, who supported the British, and the lower clergy who maintained close connections to their local habitant populations.<sup>90</sup> In the eyes of the Church leadership, the British might have been Protestants, but at least they espoused a hierarchical social structure, which was more than could be said about the American revolutionaries' calls for liberty and equality in the Declaration of Independence.

In 1791, the Constitution Act split Canada into two administrative regions, the mostly-English Upper Canada (roughly equivalent to contemporary southern Ontario) and the mostly-French and much more populous Lower Canada (roughly equivalent to contemporary southern and eastern Québec).<sup>91</sup> This system of administration gave French-Canadians control over their own

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88 Fitzmaurice, John, *Québec and Canada: Past, Present and Future*, p. 13; See, Scott W., *The History of Canada*, p. 59; and Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*, p. 12-13; Fitzmaurice, John, *Québec and Canada: Past, Present and Future*, p. 14.

89 Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*, p. 12-13; Fitzmaurice, John, *Québec and Canada: Past, Present and Future*, p.12, 16.

90 Rioux, Marcel, *Les Québécois*, p. 41.

91 Fitzmaurice, John, *Québec and Canada: Past, Present and Future*, p. 13, 17; See, Scott W., *The History of Canada*, p. 63; and Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*, p. 12-13.

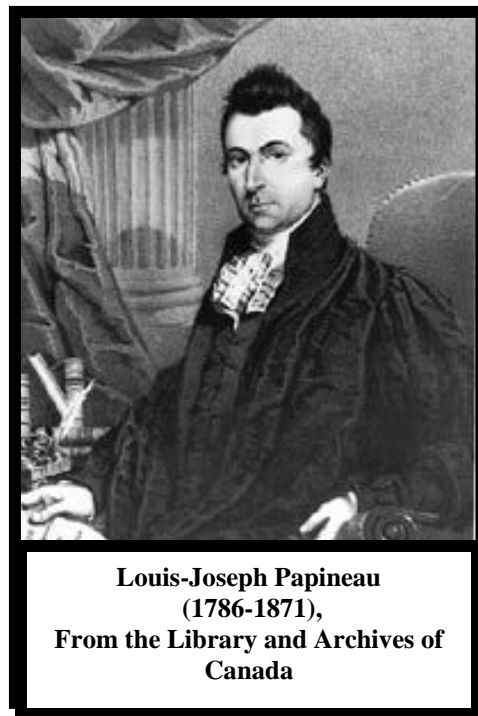


legislative assembly and would eventually lead to further French-Canadian demands for autonomy.

## 2

**Recurring Experiences:**  
**Conservative Nationalism and Racialization**  
**in Québec and New England**

In the nineteenth century, the new British rulers of Canada racialized the French-Canadian population, or began to view them as a unique racial group with inferior characteristics, which led to a distinct form of conservative French-Canadian nationalism. The tens of thousands of French-Canadian immigrants who moved to New England in the 1880s encountered much more virulent racialization from the American community, where they were labeled the “Chinese of the Eastern States.”<sup>92</sup> For a period of time, this racialization helped reinforce ethnic insularity and conservative nationalism within the Franco-American community.




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<sup>92</sup> Wright, Carroll D., “Uniform Hours of Labor,” *Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor in Massachusetts*, 1881, p. 469-471 (From Circulaire Sur Les Heures Uniformes De Travail Et Les Canadiens-Français, Carroll Wright, Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor at <http://wquercus.com/acadie/wright/wright.htm>).

### *The Rebellions of 1837*

Economically, the French-Canadian system of agriculture remained in place after the Conquest, while the English gradually took over the position of the merchant elite.<sup>93</sup> This socio-economic stratification caused resentment among some in the population. Liberal ideas, some directly taken from the French and American Revolutions, began to spread among some upper-level elites within Lower Canada during the early portion of the nineteenth century. These ideas resulted in the 92 Resolutions of 1834, which demanded a democratically-elected upper house, or legislative council, within the territory.<sup>94</sup> The council was, at the time, an appointed body. The Resolutions were generally ignored and were a major factor in the Rebellions of 1837.

The Rebellions of 1837 affected both English Upper Canada and French Lower Canada.<sup>95</sup> They represented the frustration of both populations over economic and political situations within the colony.<sup>96</sup> In Lower Canada, Louis-Joseph Papineau, the French politician who had drafted the 92 Resolutions, fled into exile in the United States as paramilitaries associated with his *Parti Patriote*

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93 Fitzmaurice, John, *Québec and Canada: Past, Present and Future*, (New York NY: St. Martin's Press, 1985), p. 12.

94 Ibid., p. 15 and Choquette, Leslie, *Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 293.

95 Fitzmaurice, John, *Québec and Canada: Past, Present and Future*, p. 16.

96 Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*. Unpublished Dissertation for Ph.D., Graduate School of State University of New York at Buffalo, September 1975, p. 18-19.

fought the colonial government in Canada.<sup>97</sup> The Church and remaining seigneurs supported the Canadian government in the rebellion, while the *Patriotes* found support among some American communities from the United States.<sup>98</sup>

The Patriotes were defeated by the British army and the recently-crowned Queen Victoria (she had been crowned on 20 June 1837)<sup>99</sup> and her government sent Lord Durham to provide further information about the causes of the rebellion. During his fact-finding trip to Canada, he spent most of his time in Lower Canada and the majority of his subsequent report focused on that portion of the colony.<sup>100</sup>

#### *Lord Durham's Impressions of the French-Canadians*

Lord Durham found some positive qualities in the French-Canadian population. He described their lives as “simple and industrious” and their character as “mild and kindly, frugal, industrious and honest, very sociable, cheerful and hospitable, and distinguished for a courtesy and real politeness,

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97 Ibid., p. 18-19 and See, Scott W., *The History of Canada*, (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), p. 67-68.

98 Guindon, Hubert, *Quebec Society: Tradition, Modernity, and Nationhood*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 97. See, Scott W., *The History of Canada*, p. 68 mentions attempts by French-Canadians and Americans to set up independent republic together. Also, Lucas II: 20

99 Lucas, Sir C.P., ed., Durham, John George, *Lord Durham's Report on the Affairs of British North America*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), Volume I, p. 10.

100 Ibid., Volume I, p. 7.

which pervades every class of society.”<sup>101</sup> He praised the population for their “refinement,” their “speculative thought,” and mastery of the “knowledge that books can give.”<sup>102</sup>

Most of the characteristics he attributed to the French-Canadians, however, were negative. He argued that the “mass of the community exhibited in the New World the characteristics of the peasantry of Europe”<sup>103</sup> and that they “clung to ancient prejudices, ancient customs and ancient laws.”<sup>104</sup> To Durham, the British were modernizing and scientific. They had left behind the superstitious behaviors of previous ages. Queen Victoria was presented with an image of a French-Canadian population that was “uneducated and unprogressive.”<sup>105</sup> Lord Durham saw that they were “in all essentials...still French; but French in every respect dissimilar to those of France in the present day. They resemble rather the French of the provinces under the old régime.”<sup>106</sup> Many of these traits he blamed on the French colonial government which had “calculated to repress the intelligence and freedom of the great mass of people” through a form of “repressive despotism...”<sup>107</sup>

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101 Ibid., Volume II, p. 30.

102 Ibid., Volume II, p. 46. Also, Ajzenstat, Janet, *The Political Thought of Lord Durham*, (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988), p. 89 points out on that Durham believes that these virtues are less important than freedom.

103 Lucas, Sir C.P., ed., Durham, John George, *Lord Durham’s Report on the Affairs of British North America*, Volume II, p. 29.

104 Ibid., Volume II, p. 30.

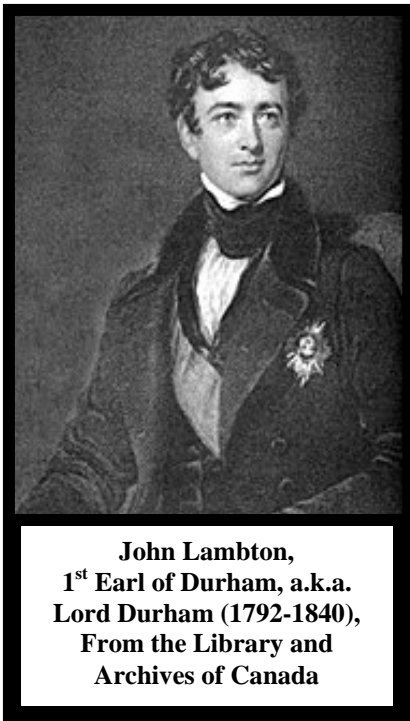
105 Ibid., Volume II, p. 30.

106 Ibid., Volume II, p. 31.

107 Ibid., Volume II, p. 27.

*Lord Durham and the Racialization of French-Canadians in Canada*

Lord Durham believed that the problem of the Rebellions stemmed from racial struggles. He described his initial impressions in a passage from his Report to the Queen: "I expected to find a contest between a government and a people: I found two nations warring in the bosom of a single state: I found a struggle, not of principles, but of races; and I perceived that it would be idle to



attempt any amelioration of laws or institutions until we could first succeed in terminating the deadly animosity that now separates the inhabitants of Lower Canada into the hostile divisions of French and English."<sup>108</sup> He also placed blame squarely with French leaders in the Assembly of Lower Canada, claiming that they had "used their democratic arms for conservative purposes rather than those of liberal and

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid Volume II, p.16. Martin argues that Durham's reports of racial warfare were seen as an exaggeration by many of those who were in power in Britain. Martin also claims that many British ministers attempted to distance their subsequent policies from the Report. In fact, many saw Durham's expedition as a ridiculous venture because its findings outlined what everyone familiar with the colonies already knew. (Martin, Ged, *The Durham Report and British Policy: A Critical Essay*, (Cambridge MA: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 11, 49, 77.)

enlightened movement.”<sup>109</sup> He never blamed the Church or the seigneurs who had supported the British government.<sup>110</sup> He also excused the English minority in Lower Canada arguing that they were superior to the French-Canadians and “that a race which felt itself thus superior in political activity and intelligence, should submit with patience to the rule of a majority which it could not respect, was impossible.”<sup>111</sup>

The major problem within Lower Canada, in Lord Durham’s opinion, was the French elite. He described the problem as follows:

“The persons of most education in every village belong to the same families, and the same original station in life, as the illiterate [habitants] whom I have described. They are connected with them by all the associations of early youth, and the ties of blood. The most perfect equality always marks their intercourse, and the superior in education is separated by no barrier of manners, or pride, or distinct interests, from the singularly ignorant peasantry by which he is surrounded. He combines, therefore, the influences of superior knowledge and social equality, and wields a power over the mass, which I do not believe that the educated class of any other portion of the world possess. To this singular state of things I attribute the extraordinary influence of the Canadian demagogues. The most uninstructed population any where trusted with political power, is thus placed in the hands of a small body of instructed persons, in whom it reposes the confidence which nothing but such domestic connexion, and such community of interest could generate. Over the class of persons by whom the peasantry are thus led, the Government has not acquired, or ever laboured to acquire, influence; its members have been thrown into opposition by the system of exclusion, long prevalent in the colony; and it is by their agency that the leaders of the Assembly have been enabled hitherto to move as one mass, in whatever direction they thought proper, the simple and ductile population of the country. The entire neglect of education by the Government has thus, more than any other cause, contributed to render this people ungovernable, and to invest the agitator with the power, which he wields against the laws and the public tranquility.”<sup>112</sup>

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109 Lucas, Sir C.P., ed., Durham, John George, *Lord Durham’s Report on the Affairs of British North America*, Volume II, p. 22.

110 Ibid., Volume II, p. 20, 130.

111 Ibid., Volume II, P. 46.

112 Ibid., Volume II, p. 33-34. Ajzenstat points out that Durham saw the French-Canadian elites as organizing a national movement for purely personal political gain and notes his hostility to them because they enforced conservative laws even while calling for liberal governmental reforms due to their majority status. Scholars who focus on nationalism continue to debate the role of elites in nationalism and ethnic conflict and Ajzenstat discusses some of the current views on this issue within the field as well (Ajzenstat, Janet, *The Political Thought of Lord Durham*, p. 78, 80, 96.)

Due to “the incompatibility of the two races in Canada,”<sup>113</sup> Lord Durham came to the conclusion that the English and the French-Canadians could not coexist forever on the continent of North America. He pointed to low rates of intermarriage, little interaction between the races, and the barrier of language.<sup>114</sup> To Durham, “it [was] scarcely possible to conceive descendants of any of the great European nations more unlike each other in character and temperament, more totally separated from each other by language, laws, and modes of life, or placed in circumstances more calculated to produce mutual misunderstanding, jealousy and hatred” than the French-Canadians and the English.<sup>115</sup> In his view, the French-Canadian population was “accustomed to rely entirely on the Government,” and therefore had “no power of doing any thing for itself, much less of aiding the central authority.”<sup>116</sup> Looking toward the future, Lord Durham declared that “never again will the present generation of French Canadians yield a loyal submission to a British Government; never again will the English population tolerate the authority of a House of Assembly, in which the French shall possess or even approximate to a majority.”<sup>117</sup>

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113 Lucas, Sir C.P., ed., Durham, John George, *Lord Durham's Report on the Affairs of British North America*, Volume II, p. 27.

114 Ibid., Volume II, p. 40,41,43.

115 Ibid., Volume II, p. 27.

116 Ibid., Volume II, p. 113.

117 Ibid., Volume II, p. 53.



Durham's solution involved the assimilation of the French-Canadian population into English culture.<sup>118</sup> He suggested that "the conquered territory" of Canada should be treated "as one open to the conquerors," and also urged that the government take on the task "of encouraging their influx, of regarding the conquered race as entirely subordinate, and of endeavouring as speedily and as rapidly as possible to assimilate the character and institutions of its new subjects to those of the great body of its empire."<sup>119</sup> Such action, combined with the establishment of "an English population, with English laws and language, in [Lower Canada]"<sup>120</sup> would settle, "at once and for ever, the national character of the Province."<sup>121</sup> Most importantly, he recommended that the Queen "trust its government to none but a decidedly English Legislature."<sup>122</sup>

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118 Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island.*, p. 19. Ajzenstat argues that Durham believed that institutionalizing ethnicity promoted injustice and, therefore, nationality should be based on individual rather than ethnic identities (Ajzenstat, Janet, *The Political Thought of Lord Durham*, p. 98). Martin claims that Durham's recommendations made the French-speaking Canadians more defensive and assimilation, thus, became more difficult to achieve (Martin, Ged, *The Durham Report and British Policy: A Critical Essay*, p. 68-69).

119 Lucas, Sir C.P., ed., Durham, John George, *Lord Durham's Report on the Affairs of British North America*, Volume II, p. 64.

120 Ibid., Volume II, p. 289. Ajzenstat argues that Durham took this position because he believed that modernization was what the French wanted and that their ethnic identity would disappear as they modernized. This view indicates that the British saw ethnicity as antithetical to modernization. (Ajzenstat, Janet, *The Political Thought of Lord Durham*, p. 76).

121 Lucas, Sir C.P., ed., Durham, John George, *Lord Durham's Report on the Affairs of British North America*, Volume II, p. 289.

122 Ibid., Volume II, p. 289.

*The Language of English Superiority*

Lord Durham defended his suggestions in terms that eerily resemble Anglo-Saxon, British justifications for wiping out the Native population of North America. There are strong similarities between the claims made in his Report and those forwarded by nineteenth-century supporters of Manifest Destiny in both the United States and Canada. In the Report, the English are portrayed as having “superior political and practical intelligence.”<sup>123</sup> According to Lord Durham, there was no doubt “as to the national character which [had to] be given to Lower Canada; it [had to] be that of the British Empire; that of the majority of the population of British America; that of the great race, which [had to], in the lapse of no long period of time, be predominant over the whole North American Continent.”<sup>124</sup> It seemed apparent to Durham that it was inevitable that Anglo-Saxon society would dominate the entire continent: “It will be acknowledged by every one who has observed the progress of Anglo-Saxon colonization in America, that sooner or later the English race was sure to predominate even numerically in Lower Canada, as they predominate already, by their superior knowledge, energy, enterprise and wealth. The error, therefore to which the present contest must be attributed, is the vain endeavour to

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., Volume II, p. 46.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., Volume II, p. 289.

preserve a French Canadian nationality in the midst of Anglo-American colonies and states.”<sup>125</sup>

In other words, the French-Canadians had no chance. Durham bluntly states that he knows “of no national distinctions marking and continuing a more hopeless inferiority. The language, the laws, the character of the North American Continent are English; and every race but the English (I apply this to all who speak the English language) appears there in a condition of inferiority. It is to elevate them from that inferiority that [he desired] to give to the Canadians...[an]...English character.”<sup>126</sup>

The French had no right to maintain their identity. According to Durham, the French-Canadians were “but the remains of an ancient colonization,”: “They are and ever must be isolated in the midst of an Anglo-Saxon world. Whatever may happen, whatever government shall be established over them, British or American, they can see no hope for their nationality....I am far from wishing to encourage indiscriminately these pretensions to superiority on the part of any particular race; but while the greater part of every portion of the American Continent is still uncleared and unoccupied, and while the English exhibit such constant and marked activity in colonization, so long will it be idle to imagine that there is any portion of that Continent into which that race will not penetrate,

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., Volume II, p. 70.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., Volume II, p. 292.

or in which, when it has penetrated, it will not predominate.”<sup>127</sup> Some of these attitudes toward the French-speaking population of Canada undoubtedly stemmed from the stereotypes of the French that had developed during the centuries-long struggles between the British and the French. The question for Lord Durham was, “by what race is it likely that the wilderness which now covers the rich and ample regions surrounding the comparatively small and contracted districts in which the French Canadians are located, is eventually to be converted into a settled and flourishing country?”<sup>128</sup> The answer, the only obvious one based on Durham’s Report and the one that he provided to his twenty-year-old Queen, was the Anglo-Saxon race in the form of the British Empire.



**“Queen Victoria (1819-1901) in her coronation robes”  
By Sir George Hayter (1792-1871)**

The Durham Report signaled the refusal of the English to grant the rights of Englishmen to the French-Canadians. The philosophy of this idea can be traced to Burke who “without encroaching upon the rights of the privileged class within the English nation, ...enlarged the principle of these privileged to

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., Volume II, p. 291-292.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., Volume II, p. 290.

include the whole English people, establishing them as a kind of nobility among nations. Hence he drew his contempt for those who claimed their franchise as the rights of men, rights which he saw fit to claim only as the 'rights of Englishmen'." <sup>129</sup> They believed in a hierarchy of races with the British at the top. <sup>130</sup>

### *French-Canadian Response*

Louis-Joseph Papineau, the French-Canadian author of the 92 Resolutions that had sparked the Rebellions, responded angrily to this Report in June of 1839. In his response, entitled *History of the Insurrection in Canada: In Refutation of Lord Durham's Report, First Part*, he rails against the British presence in Canada as a "military occupation," states that the British are "foreign oppressors," outlines "the British tyranny," and calls Durham "a dictator." <sup>131</sup> Papineau was well aware of the system of imperialism taking place in Canada and cited the experiences of other British territories like Ireland and Jamaica. <sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Quoting political theorist Hannah Arendt (Guindon, Hubert, *Quebec Society: Tradition, Modernity, and Nationhood*, p. 99).

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>131</sup> Papineau's exact words in the French were: "son occupation militaire," "opresseurs étrangers," "la tyrannie anglaise," and "dictateur" (Papineau, Louis-Joseph, *Histoire de l'insurrection du Canada: en refutation du rapport de Lord Durham, premiere partie*, (Montréal: Re-edition-Québec, 1968), p. 11).

<sup>132</sup> Great Britain still maintained its colonial system in many parts of the world in the 1830s. Britain refused to let go of its territories in Ireland. The Tithe War (1831-1836), in which Irish Catholics refused to pay Anglican tithes, had just ended at the time of the Rebellion of 1837. A Rebellion (the Baptist War) also broke out in Jamaica in 1831. This war is commonly credited with having sped up the British government's decision to abolish slavery in the British Empire in 1834 (Ibid., p. 11).

He took issue with Durham's classification of the Rebellion as the fault of the elites, stating that "among their fellow citizens, there is not one in a thousand who reproached them for having done it. Only, there is in every soul, profound grief that this resistance was hapless, but at the same time a great hope that it will be taken up again and will prevail."<sup>133</sup> Papineau saw the Report as an affront to the French-Canadians, arguing that it was "true when it accused power, false when it accused the people"<sup>134</sup> and that the independence of Canada was "in the interest of all humanity."<sup>135</sup>

Papineau argued that Durham, "wanting to prove that his favorite race, the Saxon race, is the only fit for command...lyingly portrayed them well, and he clouded, with the blackest colors, the false portrait that he drew of the French-Canadians."<sup>136</sup> At the same time, he expressed a hope that "the American Confederation, in the future, would be one and indivisible."<sup>137</sup> Papineau, aware of the French-Canadians' minority position on the North American continent, was willing to negotiate with the British as long as French-Canadian rights were guaranteed and local autonomy was maintained.

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133 Papineau's exact words in the French were: "parmi leur concitoyens, il n'y en a pas un sur mille qui leur reproche de l'avoir fait. Seulement, il y'a dans l'ame de tous un chagrin profond que cette resistance ait ete malheureuse, mais en meme temps un grand espoir qu'elle sera reprise et prevaudra" (Ibid., p. 10).  
 134 Papineau's exact words in the French were: "vrai quand il accuse le pouvoir, faux quand il accuse le peuple" (Ibid., p. 14).

135 Papineau's exact words in the French were: "par l'intéret de l'humanité tout entiere" (Ibid., p. 14).

136 Papineau's exact words in the French were: "Voulant prouver que sa race favorite, la race saxonne, est seule digne du commandement, lord Durham l'a mensongerement peinte en beau, et il a assombri par les plus noire couleurs le faux portrait qu'il a tracé des Canadiens français" (Ibid., p. 13).

137 Papineau's exact words in the French were: "la confederation americaine serait dans l'avenir une et indivisible" (Ibid., p. 8).

*The Convergence of Roman Catholicism and French-Canadian Nationalism*

The failures of the Rebellion of 1837 and the liberal nationalism that it represented led many French-Canadians to question aspects of liberal ideology. Concepts associated with the secular enlightenment had not been successful. This failure was, at least in part, due to the Catholic Church's efforts to stifle liberal revolution on the domestic front through the use of the Index, which banned books that the Church deemed dangerous, and excommunication techniques.<sup>138</sup> Consequently, French-Canadians turned away from secular nationalism in favor of religious nationalism, which took the form of a Catholic revival. The Church's brand of French-Canadian nationalism emerged from the chaos of the Rebellions and continued to dominate French-Canadian society throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth.<sup>139</sup>

Numerous administrative changes occurred in Canadian government after the Rebellions of 1837. The 1841 Act of Union created a new Province of Canada and changed Upper Canada into Canada West and Lower Canada into

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138 Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*, p. 34.

139 Brault, Gerard J., *The French-Canadian Heritage in New England*, (Hanover NH: University Press of New England, 1986, p. 16.

Canada East.<sup>140</sup> The English-speaking population of Western Canada fragmented politically, allowing the French-speaking community of Canada to maintain its voice in the legislature. Remnants of liberal nationalism abolished the seigneurial regime completely in 1854.<sup>141</sup>

In 1867, the British North American Act created the Dominion of Canada and united the Province of Canada with other colonies like Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.<sup>142</sup> The Church supported the plan and was able to survive due to the federalism within this new plan of colonial organization. "The provinces were given jurisdiction over local matters, such as health, education, and welfare, while national matters, such as money and banking, defence, and international trade, were located at the level of the federal government."<sup>143</sup>

After 1867, the French-Canadian population exploded due to increased birth rates, a trend which has been termed "Revenge of the Cradle" by some historians.<sup>144</sup> Church leaders supported a new "formula of foi, langue, and moeurs, [faith, language and customs] since they genuinely thought that parishioners would lose their souls if they became Anglicized or Protestant...At

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140 Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*, p. 19; Fitzmaurice, John, *Québec and Canada: Past, Present and Future*, (New York NY: St. Martin's Press, 1985), p. 16; and See, Scott W., *The History of Canada*, p. 68.

141 Fitzmaurice, John, *Québec and Canada: Past, Present and Future*, p. 18.

142 See, Scott W., *The History of Canada*, p. 83-84 and Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*, p. 20-21.

143 Guindon, Hubert, *Quebec Society: Tradition, Modernity, and Nationhood*, p. 103.

144 See, Scott W., *The History of Canada*, p. 71.



the same time the Church was aware that it could not antagonize Quebec's British rulers by pursuing nationalism to extremes. Anti-British policies would be self-defeating, as they would threaten the precarious position of Catholicism."<sup>145</sup> The French language and the Catholic faith became even more closely tied than before, as is seen through popular expressions of the time which portrayed French as the "guardian language of the faith."<sup>146</sup> The church continued to run education within the colony, supported the creation of agricultural cooperatives and financial-savings institutions, and celebrated the rural life over the urban.<sup>147</sup>

The new nationalism also, once again, connected French-Canadian nationalism with a territorial base in Québec, which made the movement "more inwardly intense," featuring "a sense of aloneness, an obsession with national survival (la survivance), a close interrelationship of past and present (je me souviens), and the concept of a racial and religious divine mission. Such nationalism, while never monolithic, dominated French Canadian thought for over a century and rendered all other intellectual questions subordinate to it...Besides the idea of a Providential mission, there was a strong devotion to the Land and agriculture, anti-democratic and anti-State attitudes, and hatred of les

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145 Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*, p. 28-29.

146 "La langue gardienne de la foi" (Guindon, Hubert, *Quebec Society: Tradition, Modernity, and Nationhood*, p. 105).

147 Guindon, Hubert, *Quebec Society: Tradition, Modernity, and Nationhood*, p. 108-109.

Anglais, the oppressors.”<sup>148</sup> While some liberal ideology did survive within the French-Canadian community (there were about forty-four workers’ strikes between 1866 and 1890), most of it silently disappeared in the face of majority opposition in the newly-emerging French-Canadian culture.

### **The Migration to America**

#### *From French-Canadian to Franco-American*

A massive migration took place between 1870 and 1930 in which French-Canadians, driven by the lure of industrial recruiters and a terrible economic outlook in Canada, moved as individuals and as families to the United States.<sup>149</sup> It has been estimated that over 50,000 immigrants settled in New Hampshire between 1870 and 1900.<sup>150</sup> The building of the Boston Montréal railroad in 1851 facilitated the move.<sup>151</sup> *L’Avenir National*, Manchester, New Hampshire’s Franco-American newspaper, was founded in 1889 and the First Convention of the

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148 Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*, p. 22.

149 Podea, Iris Saunders, “Quebec to <<Little Canada>>: The Coming of the French-Canadians to New England in the Nineteenth Century” in Albert, Renaud S., compiler, *A Franco-American Overview, Volumes I: New England*, (Cambridge MA: National Assessment and Dissemination Center for Bilingual/Bicultural Education, 1981), p. 114.

150 Brault, Gerard J., *The French-Canadian Heritage in New England*, p. 192.

151 Piotrowski, Thaddeus M., “The Franco-American Heritage in Manchester, New Hampshire”, in Albert, Renaud S., compiler, *A Franco-American Overview, Volumes I: New England*, (Cambridge MA: National Assessment and Dissemination Center for Bilingual/Bicultural Education, 1981), p. 218. Also, Creamer, Daniel and Charles W. Coulter, *Labor and the Shut-Down of the Amoskeag Textile Mills*, (Philadelphia, PA: Work Projects Administration, National Research Project Report No. L-5, November 1939), p. 157.

Franco-Americans of New Hampshire followed in 1890.<sup>152</sup> By 1920, the Franco-Americans made up 34% of the city of Manchester's total population.<sup>153</sup>

Additional immigrants, totaling nearly one million during this period, arrived in other New England states, upstate New York, and the upper mid-west. Most of these immigrants had roots in the south bank towns of the Saint Lawrence River.<sup>154</sup>

Some of those who remained in Canada were unhappy with the migration, fearing that the immigrants would become Anglicized in Protestant New England and lose their ethnic identity. According to them: "It [was] necessary to place responsibility for the departure of a great number of Canadian families in large measure upon the Canadian agents of the American manufacturing companies. These paid recruiters overran the countryside of the districts of Montreal and Quebec even up to the lower reaches of the river, and by alluring promises troubled the spirit of these peaceable children of the soil who lived if not in luxury, at least in modest ease and contentment."<sup>155</sup> Others did not seem to care, as shown by an alleged comment by Georges Etienne

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152 Manchester's French-language newspaper, *L'Avenir National*, first coined the term the term "Franco-American" in November of 1897 (Piotrowski, Thaddeus M., "The Franco-American Heritage in Manchester, New Hampshire", in Albert, Renaud S., compiler, *A Franco-American Overview, Volumes I: New England*, p. 217, 224).

153 26,706 people within Manchester's 78,384 were considered to be Canada-French foreign stock (Ibid., p. 233).

154 Brault, Gerard J., *The French-Canadian Heritage in New England*, p. 55-56.

155 Creamer, Daniel and Charles W. Coulter, *Labor and the Shut-Down of the Amoskeag Textile Mills*, p. 156. This statement is backed by historical evidence of advertisement in the Province of Québec at the time (Hareven, Tamara K., *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 17-19.

Cartier, Canada's prime minister: "Let them depart: it's the rabble who are leaving."<sup>156</sup>

This "rabble" arrived in a country which, like Canada, had a strong history of racialization. Americans had first racialized non-white peoples, including the Native American and African American populations. These groups were actually enslaved or destroyed through genocidal practices. While the original population of America did include some non-English-speaking, non-Protestant white ethnics, it was not until the mid-nineteenth century, when large numbers of these populations arrived on America's shores, that open hostility developed toward many of these groups.

The first large group of white ethnics to experience this hostility was the Irish population. The American reaction to Irish Catholics' attempts to move into American society and establish Catholic churches can serve as a template for anti-immigrant groups during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Future immigrant groups, like the Italians, the Poles, the Jews, the German Catholics, the Greeks, the Franco-Americans, and many others, faced tactics similar to those used against the Irish population in the mid-nineteenth century, including intimidation, discrimination within the workplace, and outright physical violence. While all of these groups would be classified as "white" by today's

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156 "Laissez-les partir: c'est la canaille qui s'en va" (Brault, Gerard J., *The French-Canadian Heritage in New England*, p. 65).

standards, they were all seen as distinct racial groups in mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth century America. All of these populations practiced a religion other than Protestantism, which could have been a major factor in the racialization process. Being Anglo-Saxon and white during this period implied that one followed the tenets of Protestantism. To many Americans, Catholicism was antiquated, superstitious, and inferior to Protestantism and also served as a threat to an informed American democracy.

*“The Canadian French are the Chinese of the Eastern States”:  
Racialization of Franco-Americans in the United States*

The emerging Franco-American population faced hostility from many communities within American society. Working class individuals in the United States hated the immigrants because they feared the effects of massive migration on wages within New England’s industrial towns. The most outspoken group with regard to New England immigration in the late-nineteenth century, however, were the Boston Brahmins.<sup>157</sup> These individuals were descendants of the original colonial leaders in Massachusetts and were overwhelmed by the number of immigrants traveling to the region.

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p.67.

The Brahmins had been experiencing a downfall in power since Jacksonianism had spread throughout the United States.<sup>158</sup> As public schools developed after the Civil War, many of the Brahmins refused to have their children educated there.<sup>159</sup> Their apprehension quickly turned to the immigrants.

One document in particular outraged the Franco-American community and led to an organized political response. Carroll D. Wright, a Brahmin born in New Hampshire, published “Uniform Hours of Labor” in the *Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor* in Massachusetts in 1881. In it, he stated that:

the Canadian French are the Chinese of the Eastern States. They care nothing for our institutions, civil, political, or educational. They do not come to make a home among us, to dwell with us as citizens, and so become a part of us; but their purpose is merely to sojourn a few years as aliens, touching us only at a single point, that of work, and, when they have gathered out of us what will satisfy their ends, to get them away to whence they came, and bestow it there.

They are a horde of industrial invaders, not a stream of stable settlers. Voting, with all that it implies, they care nothing about. Rarely does one of them become naturalized. They will not send their children to school if they can help it, but endeavor to crowd them into the mills at the earliest possible age. To do this they deceive about the age of their children with brazen effrontery. They deceive also about their schooling, declaring that they have been to school the legal time, when they know they have not, and do not intend that they shall. And when at length they are cornered by the school officers, and there is no other escape, often they scabble together what few things they have, and move away to some other place where they are unknown, and where they hope by a repetition of the same deceits to escape the schools entirely, and keep the children at work right on in the mills. And when, as is indeed sometimes the case, any of them are so situated that they cannot escape at all, then the stolid indifference of the children wears out the teacher with what seems to be an idle task. These people have one good trait. They are indefatigable workers, and docile. All they ask is to be set to work, and they care little who rules them or how they are ruled. To earn all they can by no matter how many hours of toil, to live in the most beggarly way so that out of their earnings they may spend as little for living as possible, and to carry out of the country what they can thus save: this is the aim of the Canadian French in our factory districts. Incidentally they must have some amusements; and, so far as the males are concerned, drinking and smoking and lounging constitute the sum of these.<sup>160</sup>

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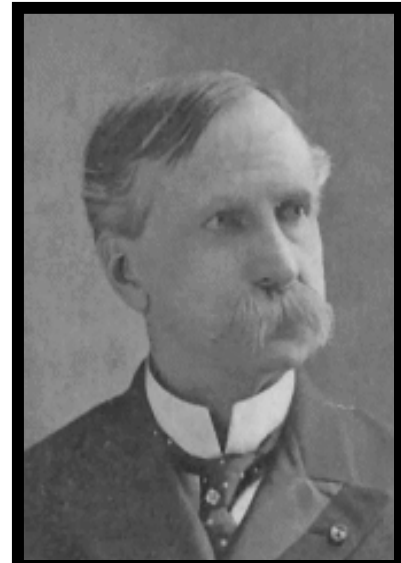
158 Solomon, Barbara Miller, *Ancestors and Immigrants: A Changing New England Tradition*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 28.

159 Ibid., p. 45.

160 Wright would later go on to become the U.S. Commissioner of Labor from 1885-1905. Wright, Carroll D., “Uniform Hours of Labor,” *Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor in Massachusetts*, 1881, p. 469-471 (From *Circulaire Sur Les Heures Uniformes De Travail Et Les Canadiens-*

The Franco-American population demanded an apology, but Mr. Wright, the Chief of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, did not see why they were offended and refused.<sup>161</sup>

Association with the Chinese community was seen as dangerous at the time, as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which barred Chinese immigration to the United States for ten years and presumed that they were unable to assimilate to American society, clearly corroborates. The Report contains many contradictions, most importantly the assertion that the Canadian French had a strong work ethic and were docile yet also spent much of their time drinking, smoking, and lazily sitting around and wasting the day away. Interestingly, the “good” traits of the Canadian French, their work ethic and docility, were completely antithetical to the stereotypes of the Chinese at the time. It is apparent that white Americans feared both the Chinese and the Franco-Americans due to their large numbers and the strong connections these



**Carroll D. Wright,  
Chief of the MA Bureau of  
Statistics of Labor  
(1840-1909)<sup>70</sup>**

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Francais, Carroll Wright, Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor at <http://wquercus.com/acadie/wright/wright.htm>).

161 Documents and picture of Carroll Wright from <http://wquercus.com/acadie/wright/wright.htm>.

groups maintained with their country of origin. More importantly, these two groups were seen as racially distinct from the Anglo-Saxon community.

Brahmin scholars from within the community “described the tragic deterioration of the Teutonic town meeting due to the presence of Celts. The Irish and the French Canadians were by race ‘uncongenial’ to this institution.”<sup>162</sup> The term Celt was used at the time to describe a unique racial group comprised of both the French and Irish peoples. This group was in contrast to the English and German Anglo-Saxon peoples. To the contemporary historian, it would appear that the only connection between the French and the Irish would be their common Catholic faith, but the Brahmins saw them as a separate, inferior racial group. Consequently, for the Brahmins, “immigration became a matter of racial preservation.”<sup>163</sup> After all, as Mayo Smith, a Brahmin political scientist and historian, stated, “the Irish drove the New England girls out of the factories of Massachusetts and now the French-Canadians are driving out the Irish.” In 1889, he was worried that “one-half of the people of Massachusetts can no longer speak of the constitution as the work of the [Founding] Fathers except in an adoptive sense, and it is scarcely possible to conceive of the Fathers adopting the mass of Catholic Irish and French-Canadians and beer-drinking Germans who

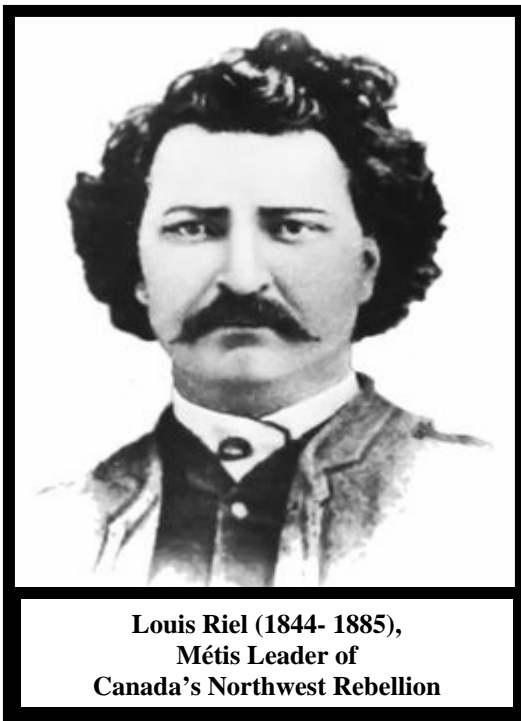
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162 Solomon, Barbara Miller, *Ancestors and Immigrants: A Changing New England Tradition*, p. 67.

163 Ibid., p. 77.



make up the foreign-born.”<sup>164</sup> The argument soon took on racial overtones as scientific racism emerged in the United States.<sup>165</sup> <sup>166</sup>Fears of immigration led to the creation of the Immigration Restriction League in Boston in 1894.<sup>167</sup> In the context of late-nineteenth century New England, the Franco-Americans were described as “swarms of ignorant peasants” who resembled their European ancestors and, “as a Celt, the French Canadian was [determined to be] quick, emotional, and generally inferior to the Anglo-Saxon.”<sup>168</sup> The image of the factory worker also stuck over time. The American population seemed to have



a difficult time pinpointing the position of the Franco-Americans in the racial hierarchy. While the Franco-Americans appeared white, they were also Catholics who maintained symbolic ties with other “undesirable” racial groups, like Native Americans.

The Northwest Rebellion of Canada in 1885, in which Louis Riel, a métis (or

descendant of both the French and Native populations) attempted to prevent the

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p. 82-86.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., p. 160-161.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p. 98, 160.

British government from extending its holdings into Western Canada, was largely supported by the Franco-American community. The United States press covered the story by emphasizing Riel's foreignness even though he had technically become a United States citizen in 1883. To Americans, Louis Riel was unconventional because he did not conform to the developing United States discourse over racial and national purity.<sup>169</sup> The Rebellion also did not fit into America's discourse over Manifest Destiny. The New York Times covered the story by stating that "the resistance of the frontiersmen to the authority of the Canadian Government is animated by the same spirit which impelled the resistance of our own Indians to the advance of civilization, and it is doomed to the same inevitable defeat."<sup>170</sup> Franco-American support for the "uncivilized" Riel confused many Americans who associated French-Canadians with civilization, even if they were racially different.<sup>171</sup> Congress' discussion of the event after Riel's execution in 1885 similarly emphasized the connection between whiteness and citizenship within the United States.<sup>172</sup>

The French-Canadians did gain some support from an influential Brahmin, Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, who argued that "the

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169 Basson, Lauren, "Savage Half-Breed, French Canadian or White US Citizen?: Louis Riel and US Perceptions of Nation and Civilization", *National Identities*, Volume 7, No. 4, December 2005, p. 370, 372, 375, 379.

170 Ibid., p. 378.

171 Ibid., p. 380.

172 Ibid., p. 383, 384.

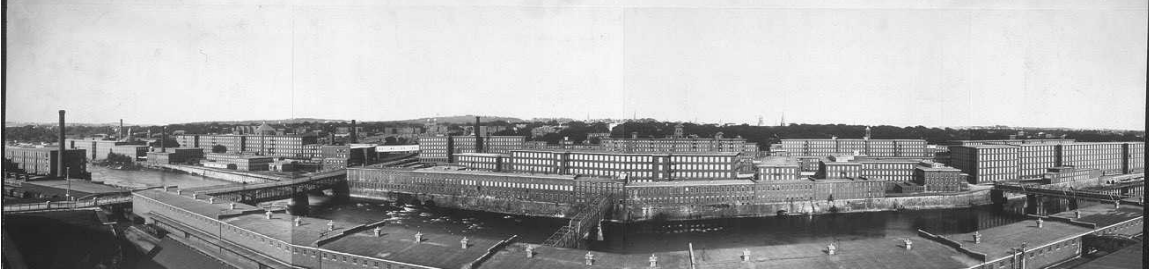
French-Canadians racially present nothing new. Among the English-speaking people...there was always a large infusion of French blood, and the French-Canadians, Americans for many generations...have proved to be a valuable and promising element in our population."<sup>173</sup> The confusing racialization which took place during the early decades of French-Canadian immigration to the United States resembled the racialization that French-Canadians had faced in Canada since the Conquest and served to strengthen the conservative nationalism and isolation of the group within American society for decades.

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<sup>173</sup> Solomon, Barbara Miller, *Ancestors and Immigrants: A Changing New England Tradition*, p. 162.

## 3

**The Amoskeag Manufacturing Company Strike of 1922:  
Kinship, Gender Roles, and Industrialization**



Historians long believed that the process of industrialization breaks down the traditional family structure. As historian and sociologist E.P. Thompson argued: “Each stage in industrial differentiation and specialization struck also at the family economy, disturbing customary relations between man and wife, parents and children, and differentiating more sharply ‘work’ and ‘life.’ Meanwhile, the family was roughly torn apart each morning by the factory bell.”<sup>174</sup> The theory argued that industrial factories instilled a sense of independence and individualism within their workers. This image was juxtaposed to the peaceful image of a family farm in which all of the members worked together throughout the day to make a living. The impersonal environment of the factory supposedly led many of the male workers to drink to excess and abuse their spouses.

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<sup>174</sup> Hareven, Tamara K., ed., *Family and Kin in Urban Communities, 1700-1930*, (New York: New Viewpoints, 1977), p. 187-188.

The work of the late Professor of History Tamara Hareven disputes the validity of this portrayal in the case of French-Canadian immigrants and their Franco-American descendants. Her work on Manchester's Amoskeag Manufacturing Company sheds light on the paternalistic practices that the company used and the respect it gave to traditional kinship ties. However, when the corporation centralized its operations through an employment office and instituted scientific manufacturing techniques similar to those used in Fordism, the local population, specifically French-Canadians, saw the move as an affront to their customs and the respect that had been given to traditional forms of kinship. Massive unionization and the Strike of 1922 followed. While French-Canadian nationalists used the protection of kinship as justification for dispersing labor unions in Québec, the Franco-American community of Manchester, New Hampshire saw it necessary to unionize in order to protect that same kinship system.

### *The Amoskeag Manufacturing Company*

The French-Canadians who arrived in Manchester, New Hampshire, in the late-nineteenth century found a town which was becoming increasingly controlled by a single company. The Amoskeag Manufacturing Company had been incorporated in 1838 when the city of Manchester was still called the town of Derryfield. The company would eventually become the largest Textile Manufacturing Company in the world, employing from fourteen to sixteen thousand workers in Manchester between 1911 and



1921.<sup>175</sup> A group of men called the Boston Associates, which included many members of the Boston Brahmin families, invested in the company near its start and continued to hold sway within the community until the Amoskeag's collapse in 1935.

Manchester, New Hampshire was a unique industrial town because it “continued to be dominated by the corporation that originally founded it in the

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175 Sweezy, Alan R., “The Amoskeag Manufacturing Company” in *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 52, No. 3. (May, 1938), p. 474.

1830s.”<sup>176</sup> In fact, until the 1930s, no new industry could enter the city without agreement from the Amoskeag because it controlled almost all of the industrial land in the city. The Amoskeag and its leaders had founded churches, given land for a city cemetery and public parks, and maintained close connections to local and regional politicians. The company overwhelmed its competition in the city and eventually controlled almost all of the mill holdings there. One former worker described the situation by saying that “it seemed like you were locked in when the Amoskeag owned the mills.”<sup>177</sup> Since many of the merchants were related to factory workers or relied on the buying power of the working classes, the survival of the city’s entire economic, social, and political structure became dependent on the Amoskeag’s success.<sup>178</sup>

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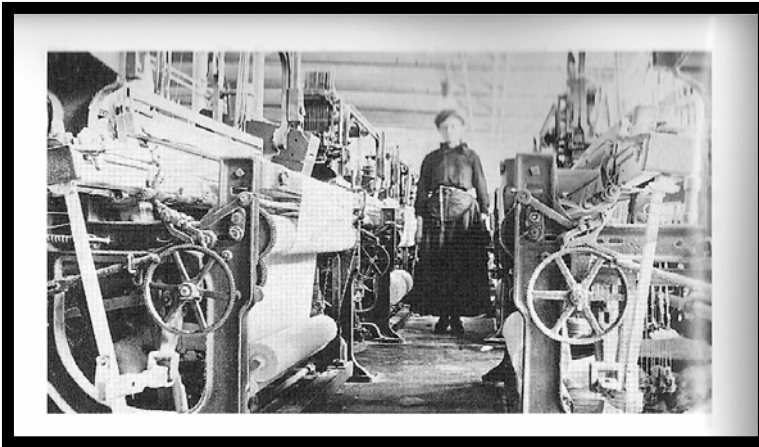
176 Hareven, Tamara K., ed., *Family and Kin in Urban Communities, 1700-1930*, p. 190 and Hareven, Tamara K., *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p.10.

177 Hareven, Tamara K., *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community*, p. 14.

178 Many other cities and towns experienced similar reliance on single companies, including Pullman, Illinois.

### *Industrialization and Changing Gender Roles*

The industrialization that accompanied the Amoskeag's founding had an effect on the role of immigrant women in Manchester.<sup>179</sup> Immigrant women



typically delayed marriage due to the pressure placed on them by kin to continue providing for their birth families.<sup>180</sup> Marriage and

children often prevented women from working full time in the mill yard.

Parents and families came to rely on their working sons and daughters to help with the family economy.

The role of married women also changed with industrialization. As mortality rates decreased, there was an "increased [chance] for intact survival of the family unit over the lifetime of its members."<sup>181</sup> Marriages lasted for a longer period of time. Increased survival rates for children changed reproductive patterns and birth rates decreased as earlier children typically survived to

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179 Hareven, Tamara K., *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community*, Chapter 8.

180 Hareven, Tamara K., ed., *Family and Kin in Urban Communities, 1700-1930*, p. 197.

181 Uhlenberg, Peter, "Changing Configurations of the Life Course," and Modell, John and Tamara K. Hareven, "Transitions: Patterns of Timing" in Hareven, Tamara K., ed., *Transitions: The Family and the Life Course in Historical Perspective*, (New York: Academic Press, 1978), p. 79 and 266.



adulthood.<sup>182</sup> Studies of women in Essex County, Massachusetts during 1880

also suggest that “when a husband’s normal earning ability was temporarily impaired” it became more acceptable for a wife to enter the workforce.<sup>183</sup>

Women could gain prominence and a perceived dominance within the family as they entered the workforce during times of economic deprivation.<sup>184</sup> This change can be attributed to the practice of paying wages on an individual rather than a familial basis, which shifted family power to the main household earner.<sup>185</sup>

When families were in dire need, children were forced to work and their education suffered.<sup>186</sup> After child-bearing, both single and married older women returned to the workforce.<sup>187</sup> These gendered work patterns helped maximize the family economy and also altered the role of women within family and society.

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182 Uhlenberg, Peter, “Changing Configurations of the Life Course,” in Hareven, Tamara K., ed., *Transitions: The Family and the Life Course in Historical Perspective*, p. 74.

183 Mason, Karen Oppenheim, Maris A. Vinovskis, and Tamara K. Hareven, “Women’s Work and the Life Course in Essex County, Massachusetts, 1880” in Hareven, Tamara K., ed., *Transitions: The Family and the Life Course in Historical Perspective*, p. 214.

184 Elder, Glen H., “Family History and the Life Course,” in Hareven, Tamara K., ed., *Transitions: The Family and the Life Course in Historical Perspective*, p. 37.

185 Engerman, Stanley, “Economic Perspectives on the Life Course,” in Hareven, Tamara K., ed., *Transitions: The Family and the Life Course in Historical Perspective*, p. 280-281.

186 Elder, Glen H., “Family History and the Life Course,” in Hareven, Tamara K., ed., *Transitions: The Family and the Life Course in Historical Perspective*, p. 38.

187 Hareven, Tamara K., ed., *Family and Kin in Urban Communities, 1700-1930*, p. 199.

*The Millyard and the Maintenance of Kinship Ties*

The extended family was also extremely important to the industrial environment.<sup>188</sup> Although nearly three-quarters of Manchester's families lived in nuclear household in 1900, flexible extended families still played an important role just as they had in Québec.<sup>189</sup> Even though these relationships were

typically looser than the obligations of extended kinship in agricultural Québec, family members expected some form of reciprocity.<sup>190</sup> If



childcare was desperately needed, an older single woman in the family might care for the children, but expected support in return when difficult times arrived.

Due to the proximity of New Hampshire to Québec, these extended kinship ties also stretched across national borders.<sup>191</sup>

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188 Through all of this talk of extended and nuclear families I want to recognize that there were undoubtedly single-parent households in Manchester, including some in my own family, throughout the period studied in this thesis. Further in-depth research would need to be carried out in order to create a clearer picture of the effects of industrialization on these families. *Ibid.*, p. 202.

189 Hareven, Tamara K., *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community*, p.160.

190 Consult *Ibid.*, p. 104-107 for Hareven's Theory of Exchange Relations and a discussion of the looseness of Franco-American extended kinship ties in Manchester, New Hampshire.

191 Hareven, Tamara K., ed., *Family and Kin in Urban Communities, 1700-1930*, p. 203.

Industrialization was of course a shock to many of the traditional agricultural patterns of work that the original French-Canadian immigrants brought with them from Québec. However, the children of these immigrants, the first Franco-American generation, were born into this new industrial world and knew nothing of the agricultural habitant lifestyle of their parents. The one consistent factor between both lifestyles was the protection of the kinship unit within the work world. Work within many industrial towns, including Manchester, was typically done “within a family-oriented social context,” rather than in an atomized, individualistic manner.<sup>192</sup> In essence, family time and industrial time coincided in many ways.

Factory owners believed that the family was “the base of morality and stability.”<sup>193</sup> Believing the myth that the industrial order was supplanting the traditional family structure, they originally attempted to model the company’s organization on the family. The Amoskeag used numerous techniques to ensure that its workers valued identification with the company over that of the working-class.<sup>194</sup> Its efforts included the institution of an employee welfare program, the organization of a Textile Club, and opportunities for health care, entertainment, and education.

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192 Anderson, Michael, *Approaches to the History of the Western Family, 1500-1914*, (Hong Kong: Macmillan Education, 1980), p. 79.

193 Hareven, Tamara K., *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community*, p. 55.

194 Ibid., Chapter 3.

Workers felt the effects of this organization, often describing the workroom as being “like a family.”<sup>195</sup> Family structure, rather than weakening, was strengthened by the paternalism of the mill yard.<sup>196</sup> In fact, kin clusters in the same workroom suggest that workroom overseers deliberately used kinship networks for recruitment.<sup>197</sup> Older children who married or left their birth families could still maintain close ties with parents or younger siblings by working with them in the same workroom. The hierarchical aspects of the business were familiar to the French-Canadian immigrants because of their similarities to Québec society.<sup>198</sup>

The Amoskeag seems to have promoted and amplified the positive effects of paternalism in recruiting employees. The concept is apparent in advertisements in Québec: “More than 15,000 persons work in these mills that border on both sides of the river. The wages of these people have permitted them to acquire ease and all seem to be content with their lot. It is true that the large company to which they sell their labor treats them as its own children...[The Amoskeag] treats [employees] not as machines but as human beings, as brothers who have a right not only to wages but also to the pleasures of life...Its employees work not only to earn a wage but to please their

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195 Ibid., p. 72.

196 Ibid., p. 117.

197 Ibid., p. 93, 129.

198 Ibid., p. 122.

employers, who know how to treat them well. It has resolved with justice to itself and its workers the problem of the relations between capital and labor.”<sup>199</sup>

The Amoskeag even supported the French-Canadians against the verbal attacks of the Boston Brahmins.<sup>200</sup>

### *Changing Mill Practices and Unionization*

Not surprisingly, the company’s respect for traditional kinship patterns was effective in keeping union activity at bay.<sup>201</sup> As Hareven writes, “In generating an Amoskeag consciousness in the workers, paternalism delayed the development of their collective awareness as workers.”<sup>202</sup> However, significant changes occurred in the Amoskeag’s structure in 1911 that would alter the course of management-labor interactions for the remainder of the company’s existence. In that year, the Amoskeag created an employment office through which all workers seeking to be hired or transferred had to pass.<sup>203</sup> The company felt that it could curb competition with Southern factories by adopting techniques employed by Fordism and Taylorism. Streamlining the production process

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199 Creamer, Daniel and Charles W. Coulter, *Labor and the Shut-Down of the Amoskeag Textile Mills*, (Philadelphia, PA: Work Projects Administration, National Research Project Report No. L-5, November 1939), p. 170 and Hareven, Tamara K., *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community*, p. 17, 20.

200 This is interesting since some of the Brahmins controlled the Company (Hareven, Tamara K., *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community*, p. 254).

201 The only major strike at the Amoskeag before World War I occurred in 1886, followed by one in 1918. Unionization after World War II caused the largest strike in 1922. (Ibid., p. 28-29.)

202 Ibid., p. 68.

203 Ibid., p. 225.

would reduce costs by increasing efficiency. This change toward scientific management centralized the hiring practices of the company and took control of hiring decisions out of the hands of the overseers. It also, therefore, served to undermine the influence of kinship networks on the company's hiring practices.<sup>204</sup> The effects of the change were not large during World War I because Manchester had experienced a labor shortage as the demand for war production increased substantially. Once the war ended, however, production decreased and the Amoskeag faced a labor surplus.<sup>205</sup>

Some industries in Manchester had begun to unionize before the war, but the Amoskeag remained largely unaffected until 1918 when the United Trade Workers gained access.<sup>206</sup> The union also did not support the role of kinship. Instead, it advocated seniority in hiring practices.<sup>207</sup> Workers viewed the union, however, as a sign of protest against what they saw as betrayal by company management.

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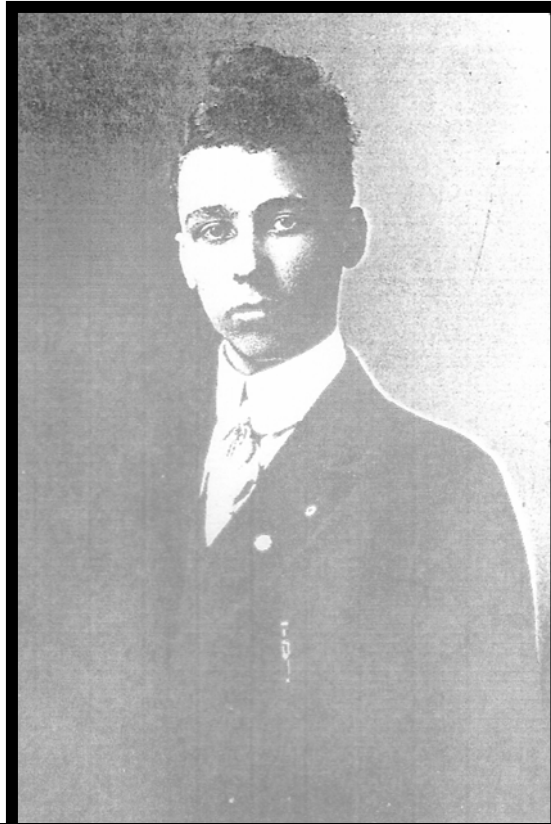
204 Ibid., p. 101.

205 Ibid., p. 223.

206 Ibid., p. 151, 290.

207 Ibid., p. 113.

The changes in kinship influence were accompanied by the institution of scientific work practices in the mill yard. Workers, who were used to conversing or playing games on the factory floor, were now trained to move their bodies more efficiently and faster in order to produce more material in a shorter period of time.<sup>208</sup>



**The author's great-grandfather, Gédéon Morency (1896-1968), and Amoskeag Employment Slip indicating Gédéon was "On Strike" in 1922**

Worker reactions to these changes were similar to those in other factories where aspects of Fordism were introduced. Members who joined the unions complained to the management about the changes in pace that had

Name <u>G. Morency</u>		L-8 3000	
Write last name first		Pass No. <u>—</u>	Pay Roll No. <u>819</u>
Nationality <u>—</u>		Payment Ending <u>Sept 1, 1922</u>	
Employed as <u>—</u>		Div. <u>General</u>	
Dept. <u>Woolen</u>		Mill <u>M 3 Room</u>	
Is <input type="checkbox"/> Leaving	because <u>on strike</u>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Discharged			
Remarks: <u>✓</u>		CHARACTER OF SERVICE	
		Work	1 2 3
		Conduct	
		Steadiness	
Date <u>Sept. 5, 1922</u>		Signed: <u>T. G. Simon</u> M. Oversecr.	

been instituted. They were also worried about the quality of material that was being provided because it affected the quality of the resulting product.<sup>209</sup> In fact,

<sup>208</sup> These feelings have been noted by workers in other factories which promoted Fordism and the scientific management espoused by Taylorism (Ibid., p. 112)

the main individual complaints received from the company were almost entirely related to job security and the declining quality of the Amoskeag's product.

Amoskeag workers had always been proud of their products. Ideologically, the workers saw the institution of scientific management as demeaning and it made them feel inferior. Dorothy Moore, an Amoskeag Manufacturing Company worker, described the men who came to watch the workers: "People like Freddy Meharg and Eddy Dunbar were time [and motion] estimators. The workers called them spotters because they sat themselves down beside a certain person who was doing a certain amount of work and timed them...Those spotters would simply plop themselves down beside the workers and make them nervous...You can understand how she felt if she had never really had anyone stand over her before."<sup>210</sup> The workroom became a place for competition rather than kinship as quotas needed to be met.<sup>211</sup>

Opportunities for transfer declined along with career mobility during this period as well, especially for ethnic workers.<sup>212</sup> Frederic C. Dumaine, Amoskeag's treasurer, had worked his way up to the management level- one of the few Franco-Americans to do so.<sup>213</sup> During the Strike of 1922, in which many

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid., p. 301-303.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., p. 136, 284.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., p. 259-262 and Kenison, Arthur M., *Frederic C. Dumaine: Office Boy to Tycoon*, (Manchester, NH: Saint Anselm College Press, 2000).



of his compatriots took part, he could not understand the changes that had taken places within the company. He argued that if they worked hard, Franco-Americans could move up the management ladder and be successful. The workers disagreed. As a result of the company's changes and labor's response to these changes, paternalism began to collapse between 1918 and 1922.<sup>214</sup>

*"Singing the Song of Angry Men" and Women:  
French-Canadians and the Strike of 1922*

The Strike of 1922 began with the announcement by Amoskeag's management on February 2, that there would be a new reduction of 10% in pay. Agent William Parker Straw, whose father and grandfather had served as Amoskeag's agents in Manchester since 1858, added that this meant a 20% cut in hour and piece rates and a 48-54 hour work week.<sup>215</sup> The union quickly contacted the United Textile Worker's (UTW) Vice-President James Starr to inquire if a strike could be held.<sup>216</sup> Workers voted and the results were announced on 10 February. Vice-President Starr indicated that 12,150 workers had voted and that 12,032 rejected the management's changes, while only 118 accepted.<sup>217</sup> The ownership responded through Agent Straw who said that "there can be no compromise in the reduction of wages and the increase in hours

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214 Hareven, Tamara K., *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community*, p. 309.

215 *Manchester Leader* 2 February 1922.

216 *Manchester Leader* 2 February 1922.

217 *Manchester Leader, Manchester Daily Mirror and American* 10 February 1922.

as posted. The present industrial and economic conditions of the country, which are not of our making, demand this move as a step in our return to normal conditions and obviously cannot be successfully combatted."<sup>218</sup> Striking began on 13 February all throughout New England as similar conditions had been put forth by other companies.<sup>219</sup> In Rhode Island, Franco-American Governor San Souci threatened to use cavalry troops to put down any violence in Pawtucket, Woonsocket or Centreville, traditional Franco-American centers.<sup>220</sup>

For the next few months, Protestant and Catholic ministers, state leaders and federal government officials attempted to come to a compromise, but the union refused to listen and the

738 Healy  
L-8  
2YR 4mo

DIONNE JOSEPH

Did not report for work Feb. 13, 1922.  
Out on Strike.

Nationality . . . . .  
Class of Work Painter

H. E. Thompson, Supt.  
April 20, 1922.  
F. R. Vose, Supt.

**Amoskeag Employment Card indicating that a Franco-American worker, Joseph Dionne, was on Strike in 1922**

management refused to budge on what they saw as necessary changes. They were worried about competition from the Southern textile industry and some of the stockholders were putting pressure on the company to abandon Manchester and move to the South to decrease costs.<sup>221</sup> Many members of the Amoskeag

<sup>218</sup> *Manchester Leader* 10 February 1922.

<sup>219</sup> *Manchester Leader* 13 February 1922.

<sup>220</sup> *Boston Advertiser* 14 February 1922.

<sup>221</sup> This time period signals the beginning of deindustrialization in the North.

management were placed in a difficult position by the strike. They had close ties to the local and state community and did not want to abandon them, but the company could not maintain its operations at current levels. The trustees responded to the stockholders, stating that "It [had] never been their intention to abandon operations in Manchester and bring to the City the disasters such a move would entail."<sup>222</sup> In early March, French-Canadian recruiters arrived to entice



Franco-American families to return to Québec and it appears that about sixty families did leave.<sup>223</sup> The recruitment was seen as an intrusion by the editors of *L'Avenir National*.<sup>224</sup>

The strikes gained support from the American Federation of Labor and its leader Samuel Gompers on 13 March, but claims of communist infiltration raised alarms within Manchester.<sup>225</sup> The police claimed to have found communist circulars in areas around the city.<sup>226</sup> These claims seemed even more pressing as

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<sup>222</sup> Creamer, Daniel and Charles W. Coulter, *Labor and the Shut-Down of the Amoskeag Textile Mills*, p. 56. Americans during this time period (the first Red Scare Era) were fearful of radical ideology infiltrating American society and a possible Bolshevik revolution in America.

<sup>223</sup> *Manchester Leader* 4 March 1922.

<sup>224</sup> *L'Avenir National* 3 March 1922.

<sup>225</sup> *Manchester Leader* 13 March 1922.

<sup>226</sup> *Manchester Union and Manchester Daily Mirror and American*, 10, 11 March 1922.

the movement had gained the support of Mrs. Elizabeth Glendower Evans of Brookline Massachusetts who had offered financial support to Nicola Sacco and Barolomeo Vanzetti during their murder trial the year before in which the two were accused of being anarchists.<sup>227</sup> She actually spoke with treasurer Dumaine and reported the conversation to local newspapers, saying that “He said that when he was a boy he worked 54 hours and over...Mr. Dumaine did not believe that 54 hours was too long for a mill operative to work.”<sup>228</sup> Even though the strike had been peaceful, these worries prompted the police to tell strikers that even heckling would be seen as intimidation and result in arrest.<sup>229</sup> Two men of French heritage, Agapite Bellerive and Omer Lanoie were charged with heckling some workers who returned to the mill yard on 20 March.<sup>230</sup>

Even through the tension, strikers stopped on news that Colonel Straw’s youngest daughter Joesphine Perkins Straw had died.<sup>231</sup> Such considerations indicate that a strong sense of shared community still existed between Manchester’s workers and management. Most of the newspaper reports from the period highlighted the peacefulness of the strike and Protestant ministers noted the same in their weekly sermons. Eventually, the strikers called for Police Chief M.J. Healy’s removal for harassing strikers and the movement became

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227 *Manchester Leader* 2 March 1922.

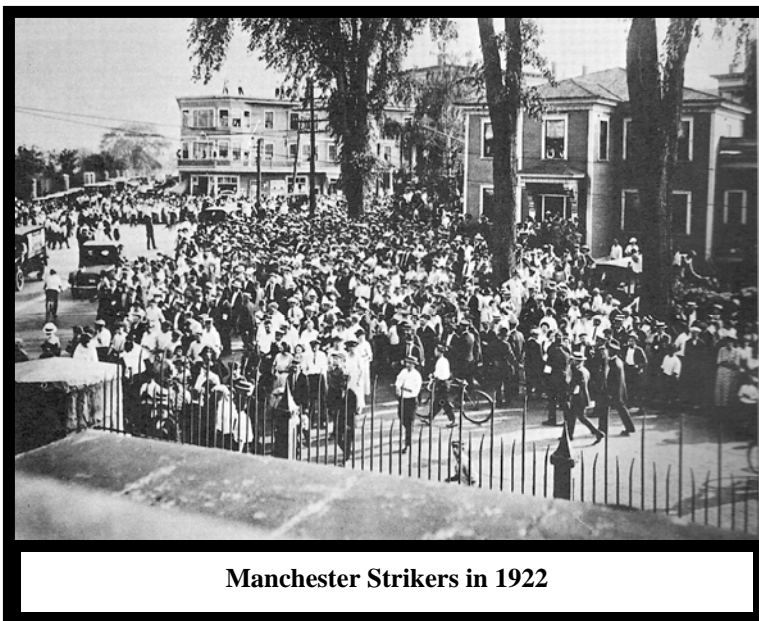
228 *Manchester Union* 13 March 1922.

229 *Manchester Union* 16 March 1922.

230 *Manchester Union* 20 March 1922.

231 *Manchester Leader* 15 March 1922.

more violent.<sup>232</sup> On 6 June, Victoria Cirochan was charged with throwing bags of sand on workers' heads from an overpass, while four strikers of French heritage were charged with assaulting workers three days later.<sup>233</sup> Women played a major role in the striking and were consistently featured in regional newspaper photographs.<sup>234</sup>



**Manchester Strikers in 1922**

As the strike moved into its fourth month and families began feeling the sting of wagelessness, the union leaders began accusing government leaders of being involved with the

Amoskeag. New Hampshire Governor Albert O. Brown was accused of being in the Amoskeag's pocket and even the local Park Commissioner, Mr. Carpenter, was accused of remarking, in response to claims that the strikers' freedom to

<sup>232</sup> *Manchester Mirror* 6 June 1922. Creamer and Coulter suggest that the police were being paid by the Amoskeag (Creamer, Daniel and Charles W. Coulter, *Labor and the Shut-Down of the Amoskeag Textile Mills*, p. 41, 200). Hareven also suggests the use of blacklists and spies within the corporation. She quotes the son of F.C. Dumaine as saying that "'Dad and Chief Healey [the police chief] were like that' (showing interlocking fingers)" (Hareven, Tamara K., *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community*, p. 314).

<sup>233</sup> *Manchester Daily Mirror and American* 6 June 1922 and *Manchester Leader* 9 June 1922.

<sup>234</sup> *Boston Advertiser* 8 June 1922. Hareven states that the Amoskeag's list of activist group "agitators" included more men than women, in a ratio of 88:15 (Hareven, Tamara K., *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community*, p. 330).

organize was being prevented, that the Constitution “was written a long time ago.”<sup>235</sup> At the same time, strikers continued to make use of extended kinship networks to survive.<sup>236</sup>

While some local leaders, like the pastor of the First Congregational Church, Mr. Herbert Jump, supported the strikers’ rights, his and others’ attempts at negotiation in the following months all failed.<sup>237</sup> Strikebreakers were soon brought into the Amoskeag.<sup>238</sup> On 25 November, strike leaders determined “that the real and permanent victory for the 48-hour work week [was] not to be won in the offices of the textile corporations but in the legislative halls of the state house” and recommended calling off the strike, which was supported through a vote the following day.<sup>239</sup> The welfare program was terminated and some employees were returned to work, but another, more violent strike in the mid-thirties shut down the factory forever.<sup>240</sup>

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235 *Boston Advertiser* 13, 14, 15, 20 June 1922.

236 Hareven, Tamara K., *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community*, p. 114, 321. The Reverend Jump was also mentioned in many papers of the period.

237 *Ibid.*, p. 313. The Reverend Jump and Bishop Guertin were both mentioned as negotiators in many papers of the period.

238 *Ibid.*, p. 327.

239 *Ibid.*, p. 329 and Creamer, Daniel and Charles W. Coulter, *Labor and the Shut-Down of the Amoskeag Textile Mills*, p. 202.

240 , Daniel and Charles W. Coulter, *Labor and the Shut-Down of the Amoskeag Textile Mills*, p.203 and Hareven, Tamara K., *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community*, p. 346.

The Strike of 1922 shows not only a break between labor and management in the Amoskeag, but also a break between middle-class Franco-American elites, who maintained strong ties with Québec, and an emerging Franco-American working class. On 3 February, *L'Avenir National*, Manchester's Franco-American



**Maurice Duplessis  
(1890-1959),  
Premier of Québec  
(1936-1939, 1944-1959)**

newspaper, ran an editorial about the Amoskeag management's new work regulations. It read: "This is the time, more than ever, for moderation and reflection...Reflection is necessary in order to weigh the consequences of an action that could be disastrous for the working class and for the entire city...If the proposed compromise isn't accepted, if the workers

stubbornly insist and begin a fight, the outcome of which they cannot say will be favorable for them, the great factories that border the two banks of the Merrimack will be closed indefinitely, and this would be a calamity, not only for the families who earn their living in the cotton industry, but for the entire city...The counsels of moderation must prevail."<sup>241</sup> This first editorial showed the fears that the Franco-American elite had about the possibility of a strike.

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<sup>241</sup> *L'Avenir National* 3 February 1922.

On 11 February, the day after the union had voted for a strike, another editorial was written that attempted to stop the community from participating in the strike: "But is the timing of the strike well chosen?...The strike is declared, the strike has nearly begun, but who has declared this strike? Of the 17,000 employees of the Amoskeag and Stark factories only a quarter take part in workers' organizations...We cannot prevent ourselves from asking for all those interested to reflect well before making a final decision. We sincerely believe that after a serious study of the situation and all of its aspects, the employees of the Amoskeag and Stark cotton mills will infallibly come to the conclusion that it would be better for them to return to work Monday morning, and if they act in this manner they will render service to themselves and to the city of Manchester."<sup>242</sup> On 22 March, an ad supporting the union position was run in all of the major English-language papers in the region, but not in *L'Avenir National*—something which was noted by management in their newspaper clippings of the strike.<sup>243</sup> This editorial went even further and accused the union workers of lying about the number of votes for the strike. These actions and opinions correspond perfectly with the mood of French-Canadian nationalists at the time. The conservative French-Canadian movement in Québec that supported the newspaper *L'Action Française* was certainly against union movements that

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<sup>242</sup> *L'Avenir National* 11 February 1922.

<sup>243</sup> *Amoskeag Manufacturing Company Clippings Scrapbooks, Volumes I (February 2 – March 22, 1922 [June 5])* on 22 March 1922.



resembled socialism or communism. In the future, this form of nationalism would gain a foothold in Québec with the rise of Maurice Duplessis of the Union Nationale Party to the position of premier (1936-1939, 1944-1959) and his crackdown on labor organizations and communists.<sup>244</sup>

By June, the paper was beginning to take an even stronger stance. On 3 June, an editorial read: "It is beautiful, it is great and noble to fight for a principle that one believes to be just, but there is no glory in breaking one's head against a stone wall when we can not come out on top. It is evident and manifest that the manufacturers will make no concession and they can wait. In the other corner, it is certain that a good number of employees absolutely want to win on their point, but are they in a position as strong as the adversaries whom they fight against? ...They blame us [the newspaper] again, they say that we betray those whom we should help and protect, but the interested parties know perfectly of which side are the traitors and exploiters. The truth is beginning to dawn, and the future will say who are those who really had the true interests of the working class at heart."<sup>245</sup> Again the paper attacks the union leaders four days later, saying "The great sadness in circumstances like these is that an oversized number of people, animated by others with sentiments of deference for that which is just and reasonable, let themselves easily be circumvented by this other

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<sup>244</sup> See, Scott W., *The History of Canada*, (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), p. 127-128, 156-157.

<sup>245</sup> *L'Avenir National* 3 June 1922.

element which resorts to violence and disorder to attain its ends...certain hot heads...unfortunately they will not be the only victims, but a crowd of others, swept up by a pernicious example, could have occasion to bitterly regret having followed pernicious advice."<sup>246</sup> On 3 July, the paper even attacked Samuel Gompers.

*L'Avenir National's* position indicates that many within the Franco-American community, especially those who continued to strike throughout the period in which these editorials were published, disagreed with the paper's position.<sup>247</sup> They had, it seems, even attacked the paper as treacherous. These editorials show that a rift over traditional values had begun to split the Franco-American community of Manchester, New Hampshire during the strikes.

The strike was, nonetheless, unsuccessful, just as other liberal forms of organization had been unsuccessful during the Rebellion of 1837. Unions were discredited and a sense of defeat permeated the community of Manchester.<sup>248</sup> While unionizing did serve to liberalize some aspects of Franco-American identity, some traditional patterns of kinship did remain intact.

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<sup>246</sup> *L'Avenir National* 7 June 1922.

<sup>247</sup> While the numbers of Franco-Americans who participated were lower as a percentage of their total population than the Poles or Greeks, the numbers were still larger than most other groups due to the sheer size of the Franco-American population of the city. The Irish made up a significant portion of the striking community as well (Hareven, Tamara K., *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community*, p. 330-331).

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153, 338.

## 4

**The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929):**  
**Qui Perd Sa Langue, Perd Sa Foi?<sup>249</sup>**

5 March 1925

The Situation in Manchester

The situation in the diocese of Manchester would not be tolerated by any ethnic group that did not possess the profound faith which is the characteristic attribute of our own.

Evidently, the luxury of having one of our own as the Bishop of an American diocese does not entail all of the advantages.

The Irish episcopate, which dominates the Catholic Church in the United States, finishes by destroying all obstacles arising from the patriotism of prelates, to make apostles of Anglicization...

In mixed dioceses, the Irish will always have the upper hand, and every prelate of French descent who will have direction there, will finish inevitably by giving in to the dissolving action, persevering and devious, of Irish priests of their diocese, endorsed by the Irish episcopate.

The diocese of Manchester is resounding evidence of what we advance...

'He (the Irishman) is the most American of Americans, the most frenzied of the Yankees, the most magnificent of eagles with spread wings...The Irishman who remained Catholic, who abdicated nothing and who has no shame of these two titles, appears to have learned nothing from the past, and he wants, in his turn, in the new homeland to impose a unity of language. The oppression, in Ireland, caused the language of his brothers to disappear; contempt, in America, gave his religion incalculable losses, he dreams of a Catholic America under the hegemony of the English language; he longs for oppression. The Irish clergy, in the United States is a more ferocious enemy of French, German, Polish, and Italian Catholics...'

It is the unification of languages, and the obliteration of the sense of nationality for all non-Anglo-Saxon groups...

It is why we said at the beginning of this article, that it is necessary to have a profound faith like ours to tolerate the situation that is done to us in the diocese of Manchester...

We will demonstrate in subsequent articles, the false national teaching given in many schools of the diocese; the parishes with a great majority of Franco-Americans not given any instruction in French; Franco-American parishes directed by Irish priests; high schools, built with our money, in the hands of communities devoted to our national destruction: all these things in order to prove that a change must occur otherwise...

Blaise Juillet<sup>250</sup>

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249 One who loses his language, loses his faith.

During World War I, American organizations expressed American nationalism through the phrase “one country and one flag.”<sup>251</sup> The decade which followed saw an increase in outspoken American nationalism. Many Americans associated the red scare of the World War I era with recent southern and eastern European immigrants who happened to speak languages other than English. This association could have been due to the strength of socialist groups within the Italian state during the War and the Russian Revolution’s effect on Eastern Europe after 1917. The perceived connection between radical ideology and language or country of origin led many of these organizations to change their rallying cry to “one country, *one language*, and one flag!”<sup>252</sup> Immigration laws were passed in 1921 and 1924, which set up quotas for different nationalities and severely restricted the arrival of immigrants from countries that Americans associated with radical ideology, especially those from Southern and Eastern Europe and Asia. Although Franco-American ideology, with its focus on traditional family ties, the Catholic faith, and the French language, was far removed from the tenets of communism or socialism, this highly visible community in New England was quickly enveloped by the fight over language.

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250 Pseudonym of Elphège Daignault (Perreault, Robert B. *Elphège-J. Daignault et le Mouvement Sentinelliste à Manchester, New Hampshire*, (Bedford NH: National Materials Development Center for French and Creole, 1981), p.66-71.

251 “Qu’un pays et un drapeau” (Rumilly, Robert, *Histoire des Franco-Américains*, (Montréal: L’Union Saint-Jean-Baptiste, 1958), p. 321.

252 “Qu’un pays, une langue, et un drapeau” (Ibid., p. 321.

Due to its importance to French-Canadian and Franco-American identity, Franco-American elites organized rallies, protested at state legislatures, and applied political pressure on fellow ethnic leaders to protect the French language.

As French-Canadian immigrants and their Franco-American descendants organized against assimilation policies, the Roman Catholic Church in the United States rallied behind these same policies.<sup>253</sup> The hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church in America, unlike the Church in Canada, was dominated by the Irish who had fought to establish a strong Catholic Church throughout the United States and encountered racialization and Protestant hostility as a result. The American Church's support of assimilation policies was in response to American hostility toward foreign influence on American soil. It felt, as did the Pope, that assimilation was the simplest way to protect the interests of the church.

The most vocal of Franco-American anti-assimilation groups, the Sentinelles, with the support of the Canadian Church hierarchy and French-Canadian nationalists from Québec, asked the Pope to place more power in the hands of local parishes rather than the bishops and their dioceses. Such

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253 Sorrell, Richard S, "The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929): Religious and Militant Survivance in Woonsocket, Rhode Island" from Giguère, Madeleine, ed., *A Franco-American Overview, Volume IV: New England*, (Cambridge MA: National Assessment and Dissemination Center for Bilingual/Bicultural Education, 1981), p.177.

decentralization would make it difficult for the Church hierarchy to implement assimilation policies. In 1927, when support was not immediately given, the Sentinelles turned to civil litigation in the American court system. Surprisingly, the Ku Klux Klan praised the Sentinelles because it perceived the litigation as an attack against the Catholic Church. The Pope agreed. When the case was lost in civil court, the Pope excommunicated all of the Sentinelles who had signed the civil suit because he had come to view the Sentinelles as a challenge to the Church's authority, effectively killing the movement.

More importantly, the involvement of civil government in church affairs furthered the conflict over identity that had already been developing within the Franco-American community. As the Sentinelles attempted to change the Church from within, many Franco-Americans supported the cause, but the Pope's excommunication made it clear that the Church did not support the position of the Sentinelles. The old mantra, "*qui perd sa langue, perd sa foi*,"<sup>254</sup> was not translating into the Franco-American experience in American society.

What was one to do if the Church and one's language were in conflict, as they were in America? Which was more important to Franco-American identity? The community fractured along these lines. Moderates argued that Catholic identity (*foi*) was more important than retention of the French language (*langue*)

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254 One who loses his language, loses his faith.

in the parish school system, while Sentinelles argued that the French language had to be taught in parish schools or it would be lost and Franco-American youth would be exposed to negative Anglo-Saxon ideologies. The result, according to the Sentinelles, would be a loss of both language and faith.

The Franco-Americans of Rhode Island and Western Massachusetts largely supported the cause of the Sentinelles, but those who lived within the boundaries of the diocese of New Hampshire took a different view. How did the city which called itself “the most French of American cities in the United States” (Manchester) find itself in conflict with “The Québec of New England” (Woonsocket)?<sup>255</sup> How did the Franco-American community, which shared many of the same historical memories, begin to develop completely different definitions of what it meant to be Franco-American during this period? The presence of New England’s first Franco-American bishop in the diocese of Manchester certainly made it difficult for the Sentinelles to gain support for their message in New Hampshire. The group was met with much resistance by Bishop Guertin and many other leading Franco-American officials within the community who supported the Catholic Church’s assimilation policies. The issue of race was raised again, this time by Franco-Americans themselves in the

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<sup>255</sup> Chartier, Armand, *The Franco-Americans of New England: A History*, (Canada: ACA Assurance and Institut français of Assumption College, 1999), p.75.

form of the Sentinelles, to argue that the moderates in Manchester were the equivalent of race traitors.<sup>256</sup>

### *The Catholic Church in New England*



The Roman Catholic Church which French-Canadians migrants encountered in New England was much different from the Church that they left behind. In Canada, the Church and French identity were linked; in America, the Church was seen as a hostile foreign entity that had no association with American nationalism. While the French had largely maintained control of the Church hierarchy in Québec, the hierarchy in America was run by Irishmen who had faced persecution in the maintenance of their faith.

The Irish had readily assimilated to certain aspects of American society in order to limit American fear toward the Catholic faith. They quickly learned English and took part in America's political system. They believed that by giving up some of their cultural traits, such as their language, the American population would see that they desired to be loyal Americans and would not be so hostile toward the Catholic churches in their midst.

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<sup>256</sup> Daignault went so far as to associate the moderate Franco-Americans with Judas, the betrayer of Jesus. Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*. Unpublished Dissertation for Ph.D., Graduate School of State University of New York at Buffalo, September 1975, p. 231.



The French Church in Québec had placed a particular emphasis on parish control. French-Canadians were used to their priests reporting to a group called *Le Syndique*, or parish council made up of local habitants and leaders.<sup>257</sup> They were also descendants of a tradition called Gallicanism, which maintained that the Canadian hierarchy should maintain some aspects of self-government. Such independence caused Franco-Americans to view the Irish hierarchy as authoritarian.

The Irish had brought a different set of organizational structures with them to America. They believed that the Church hierarchy should be organized at the diocesan level, rather than the parish level.<sup>258</sup> In this structure, the bishop would discuss decisions with a vicar-general, a priest, and only two lay parishioners before making decisions. Such control allowed the diocese to fundraise more effectively and limited the ability of individual parishes to stray from the Church's ideology. One of the most extreme organizational structures, implemented in Maine, was the Corporation Sole model in which the bishop controlled everything within the boundaries of his diocese.<sup>259</sup>

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257 Ducharme, Jacques, "The Shadows of the Trees: Religion and Language" in Giguère, Madeleine, ed., *A Franco-American Overview, Volume III: New England*, (Cambridge MA: National Assessment and Dissemination Center for Bilingual/Bicultural Education, 1981), p.255.

258 See the writings of Elphège Daignault in Perreault, Robert B. *Elphège-J. Daignault et le Mouvement Sentinelliste à Manchester, New Hampshire*, (Bedford NH: National Materials Development Center for French and Creole, 1981).

259 The Bishop of Manchester still has much control over the movement of priests within the diocese today.

When the French migration from Québec began, the French Church hierarchy in Québec was fearful that the migrants would be negatively influenced by the Puritanism of New England. Puritanism was organized congregationally and had a much stronger focus on the individual, which was a threat to any type of Catholic Church hierarchy. In the 1870s, the Québec Church called for repatriation, the return of the migrants to their homeland.<sup>260</sup> Some Franco-Americans did return to Québec, but many remained in New England, often due to the better economic conditions in mill towns and the increased Americanization of their American-born children.

Realizing that their calls for repatriation had failed, the French Church sent French-Canadian priests into New England in the 1880s. The goal of these priests was to create French national parishes and support survivance among the local French-Canadian population. They were, in effect, sent to protect the Franco-American population from the harmful influence of New England Protestantism. The services offered in these parishes were performed in French.

Franco-Americans were not the only Catholic immigrant population to found national parishes within the Catholic Church. Many German, Italian, and Polish populations followed the same trend. The creation of such national parishes caused a strong reaction from the established Roman Catholic Church in

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<sup>260</sup> Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*, p. 65.

the United States. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, numerous ethnic groups raised the issue of the national parish within the Catholic Church. Some of these groups appealed to Rome and won victories and papal support; others, including a Franco-American parish in North Brookfield, Massachusetts, caused schisms and national churches that competed with the established Roman Catholic Church.<sup>261</sup>

These ethnic groups were often seen by the Protestant population as separate radical racial groups that threatened American life. They had been, as the Irish were before them, racialized by American society.<sup>262</sup> The Catholic hierarchy feared that these new ethnic groups would rally Americans against not only their nationalities, but their Catholic faith as well. At the Catholic Congress at Baltimore in 1889, it was declared that national parishes had no place in America.

By the 1890s, the Vatican had shown its support to the assimilation policies of the Church in America. It believed that national parishes should be tolerated, but only as temporary measures until new ethnic groups could combine with other church groups. Rome was against violently assimilating any of the immigrant populations and believed that the goal of an English-speaking

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

Church that would not threaten American Protestants could be achieved gradually.

Tension surrounding language issues was augmented by differences in Church educational policies in America and Québec. In Québec, a dual educational system was supported by the government.<sup>263</sup> Catholic schools were often given public funding. In America, such dual systems saw opposition. Private schools founded by the Catholic Church were distrusted, especially those that allowed teaching in languages other than English. Americans feared that these schools were indoctrinating young people, especially young women, in radical ideologies.

In the early twentieth-century, Franco-American newspapers argued that the Irish were worse than their old British enemies in Canada because they fought to take away the French language. They railed against French-Canadians who had become *déraciné*, or lost their roots, demanded that French-Canadian bishops, priests and parishes be installed in dioceses where the Franco-American population made up the majority, and argued for control of parish schools by local parish priests, especially in Franco-American areas where the priest might be more favorable to the French language than the Irish bishop. These newspapers wanted French and English language equality and called for an

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

investigation of abuses performed by the Irish hierarchy against the Franco-American population. After 1918, however, Church policy required those wishing to found national parishes to ask the Bishop who would in turn need to get approval from the Pope, making it much more difficult to found them.<sup>264</sup>

The Roman Catholic Church in the United States was becoming more centralized on a national level as well. The National Catholic Welfare Council was founded in 1919 to bring together the national hierarchy to discuss issues of importance to the Church.<sup>265</sup> The Vatican forced the organization to change its name in 1922, to the less-threatening National Catholic Welfare Conference, in order to underline its role as a consultative body rather than a legislative body.<sup>266</sup> It had come to be seen as a hostile entity, almost a Church within the Church, by the Vatican. The Québec newspaper *L'Action Catholique* approved of the change, writing that the "Council was essentially English in language, and its social goal was to render Americanization more rapidly to all foreign groups."<sup>267</sup> They soon found, however, that the new Conference would continue to push the idea of assimilation, publishing a statement in 1922 that its objective was "to transform foreign schools, in a relatively short time, into a school where the English

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264 Ibid., p. 132.

265 Rumilly, Robert, *Histoire des Franco-Américains*, p. 333.

266 Ibid., p. 333.

267 "Le National Catholic Welfare Council était essentiellement anglais de langue, et son but social était de rendre plus rapide l'américanisation de tous les groupes étrangers" (Rumilly, Robert, *Histoire des Franco-Américains*, p. 333).

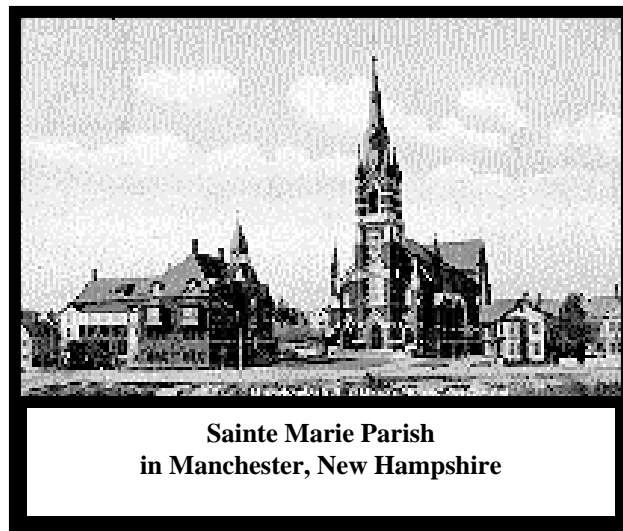
language is the only vehicle of instruction.”<sup>268</sup> The bishops of New England took this decision back to their localities and attempted to implement it.

### *The Diocese of Manchester*

When the first French-Canadian migrants began arriving in New Hampshire, all Catholics in the state were organized through the diocese of Portland, Maine.<sup>269</sup> James Healy, the bishop of Portland from 1875-1884 was the son of an Irish Southerner and one of his slaves.<sup>270</sup> He oversaw the creation of two French national parishes

in Manchester: Saint Augustin (1871) and Sainte Marie (1880).

Upon the death of Bishop Healy in 1884, the diocese of New Hampshire was founded.<sup>271</sup>



The first bishop of Manchester, Bishop Denis Bradley, was of Irish descent.<sup>272</sup> Under his care, two more Franco-American parishes were founded in Manchester: Saint Georges

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268 “L’objectif est ‘de transformer l’école étrangère, dans un temps relativement court, en une école où la langue anglaise est le seul véhicule d’instruction” (Ibid., p. 338).

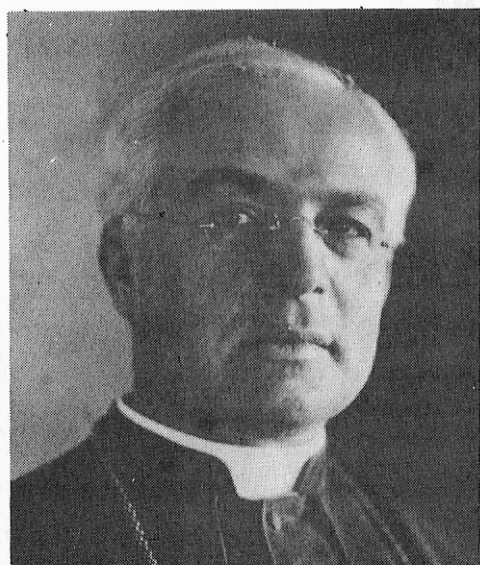
269 Paradis, Rev. Msgr. Wilfrid H, *Catholicism in New Hampshire: an Historical Summary, A Community of Faith*, (Manchester: Diocese of Manchester Centennial Committee, c. 1985), p. 13.

270 Ibid. p. 13.

271 Ibid., p. 14.

272 Ibid., p. 14.

(1890) and Saint Antoine (1899). Bishop Bradley was aware of the number of Franco-Americans in his diocese and sent many of his priests to France to gain fluency in the French language. It is interesting that the Bishop sent his priests to



**George A. Guertin (1869-1931),  
Bishop of Manchester (1907-1931)**

France and not Canada, where they would have also gained a better cultural understanding of the local population. By 1903, twenty-four Catholic elementary schools had been created in New Hampshire, serving over twelve thousand students. Four homes for the aged, five homes for working girls, a night refuge for girls, four hospitals, an infant asylum, five

orphanage asylums, eight female religious communities, and four male religious communities were also functioning by the turn of the century. Manchester provided secondary Catholic education to boys in three of its parishes and to girls in four. A Catholic college, Saint Anselm, had been founded in 1893, a French newspaper *L'Avenir National* in 1894, and the Association Canado-Américaine (ACA) in 1896.

By 1900, it is estimated that those of French-Canadian descent made up about a quarter of Manchester's population and nearly sixteen percent of the

population of the state. Irish, Polish, Lithuanian, German, Ukrainian, Melkite (Eastern Mediterranean) and Maronite (Lebanese) Catholics had also arrived in the region.<sup>273</sup> Protestants in New Hampshire did exhibit anti-Catholic sentiments. One historian referred to New Hampshire's Franco-Americans as "bigoted, priest-ridden, and adverse to changes in laws, customs, and the processes of labor"<sup>274</sup> and a mob attack was launched against one of Manchester's Irish parishes, but local governments recognized the growing importance of the Church in many of their citizens' lives. When Bishop Bradley died in 1903, the public schools were closed in his honor and all electric cars in the city stopped for two minutes in his memory.<sup>275</sup> The second Bishop of Manchester, John Delany was also Irish. His oversight lasted for three short years as he died of appendicitis in 1906. Once again, the city of Manchester came to a standstill in honor of a Catholic Church leader, indicating the strength of the Catholic Church in the city.

The third Bishop of Manchester, Bishop George Guertin, was the first bishop of the diocese to be of French-Canadian descent from both his mother and

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273 Paradis, Rev. Msgr. Wilfrid H, *Catholicism in New Hampshire: an Historical Summary, A Community of Faith*, (Manchester: Diocese of Manchester Centennial Committee, c. 1985), p. 15.

274 "Processes of labor" may indicate that the Franco-Americans were not willing to change their work habits or adapt to new work techniques like those applied by the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company when it instituted aspects of Fordism and Taylorism. Ibid., p. 15.

275 Ibid., p. 15.



father.<sup>276</sup> He had grown up in New Hampshire, spoke French fluently and had studied in Québec. His only pastorate was in Saint Antoine's in Manchester. Some of the Irish population had feared that Bishop Guertin would bring French into the parish system. After moving into the cathedral of Saint Joseph in Manchester, an Irish parish, he quickly assured the population that the church would remain English speaking. During his tenure, Assumption College, widely viewed as a Franco-American school, was founded in Worcester, Massachusetts, and three Franco-American parishes were founded in Manchester: Sacré-Coeur (1910), Saint Edmond (1911), and Saint-Jean-Baptiste (1914). In 1914, Bishop Guertin, in the name of ethnic cooperation, named Thomas Devoy, an Irishman as the new abbot of Saint Georges, a Franco-American parish.

The Church supported the mobilization effort in World War I, but was greatly affected by the subsequent Spanish Influenza epidemic of 1918 which claimed the life of one priest and 433 others in Manchester.<sup>277</sup> During that year, Villa Augustina, a Catholic elementary school that served students up to eighth grade, was founded. The Church, however, did not win a 1915 conflict with the Polish Catholic community at Saint Hedwig's in Manchester. The dispute led to a schism in which many members left to found an independent community.

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276 Paradis, Wilfrid H., *Upon This Granite: Catholicism in New Hampshire, 1647-1997*, (Portsmouth, NH: Peter E. Randall Publisher, 1998), p. 130.

277 Ibid., p. 135.

In 1918, the New Hampshire Committee on Americanization, made up of fourteen members, three or four of whom were Catholics, met to discuss the issue of immigrant education and the Principles of Americanization that had been adopted by a meeting of the governors of the states and the chairmen of the Committees on Public Safety in April.<sup>278</sup> The superintendent of Catholic schools, the Reverend Patrick Scott, was one of the members of the committee, as was Wilfrid Lessard, a Franco-American lawyer who took control as the Superintendent of the Catholic School system in Manchester in 1919. In the tradition of America's Catholic Church hierarchy, Bishop Guertin accepted the interpretations of the committees. He agreed that all students would be taught reading, writing, spelling, grammar, arithmetic, geography, physiology, history, political economy, music, and drawing only in English, that school administration would also use English, that religion and religious exercises could be conducted in a foreign language, and that a foreign language could be taught in primary schools as long as the program outlined by the Department of Public Instruction, or its equivalent, was utilized.<sup>279</sup> Such a policy changed the one that had been followed in many Franco-American Catholic schools where French had been emphasized over English or the two languages had been given equal time in the classroom.

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<sup>278</sup> Numerous Americanization efforts had been instituted by elected officials throughout the United States.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., p. 135-136.

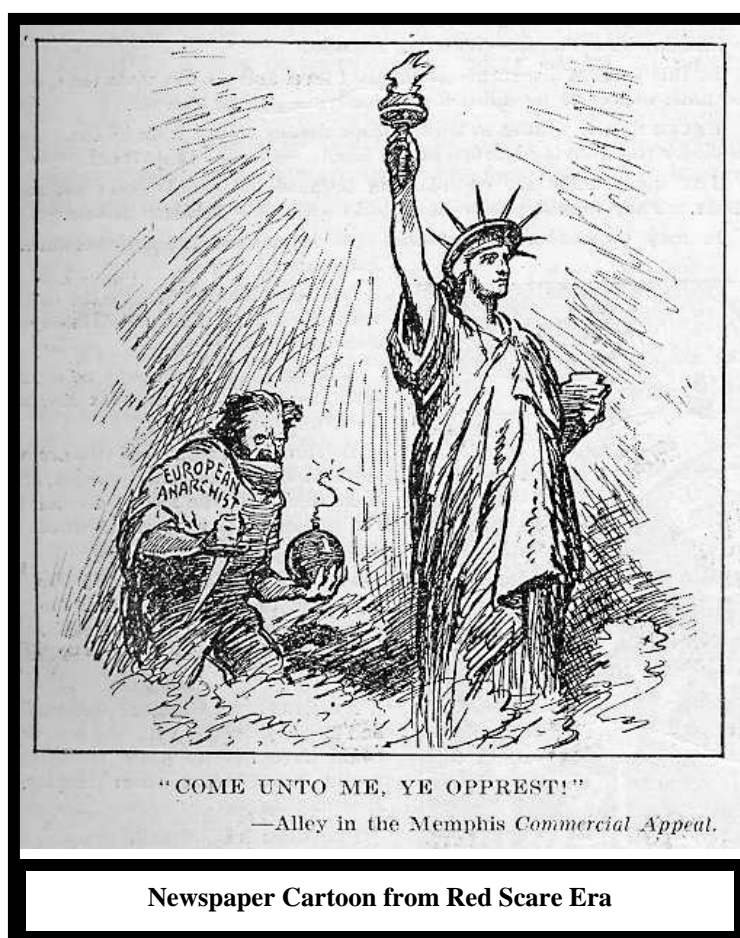
While the priesthood was still filled with those of Irish descent, the diocese of Manchester entered the twenties with a Franco-American bishop, a strong Franco-American community (almost a quarter of the city's inhabitants, many of whom were second or third generation immigrants), and a vibrant parish and educational system.<sup>280</sup>

### *American Inter-War Nationalism in New England*

The Russian Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent red scare in America led to a renewed push for American nationalism. Many New England state legislatures attempted to pass language laws restricting the use of foreign languages in the classroom.

The Massachusetts Jackson Bill of 1919 was meant to limit instruction

in foreign languages to one hour per day but was retired before representatives



<sup>280</sup> There were seven Franco-American national parishes at the time.

had a chance to vote. It was followed by the Chamberlain Bill which centralized state education policies over those of localities and required English instruction. The Chamberlain Bill also failed due to increased pressure from the Church hierarchy and ethnic groups like the Franco-Americans. Similar bills were attempted in Vermont and many western states. Some attempted to overload requirements, which would leave little time for French subjects.<sup>281</sup> By 1923, there were English language education laws in thirty-four of the nation's forty-eight states.<sup>282</sup> Due to the recent fight with Germany during World War I, some of these laws were aimed at German-speaking citizens.

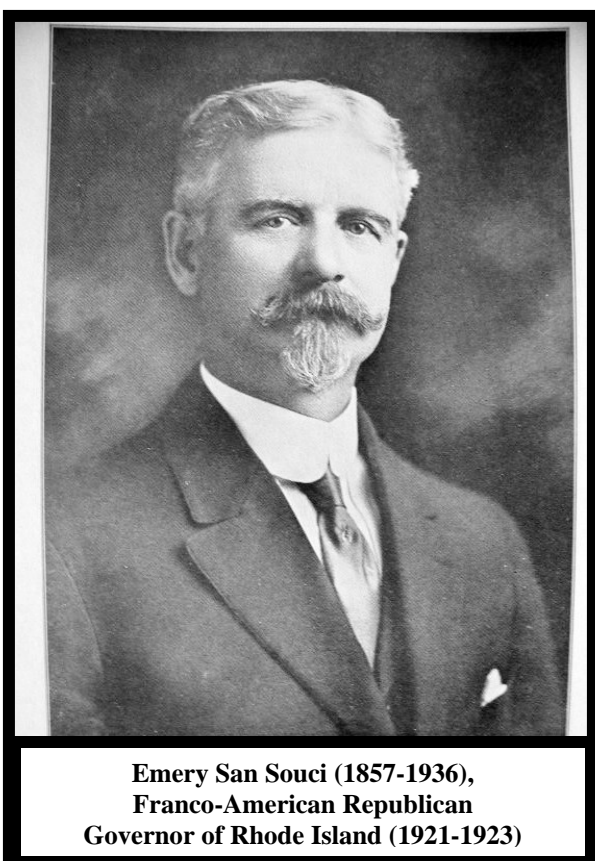
The most damaging educational law in New England, however, was the Peck Educational Bill of 1921, which swept through the Rhode Island state legislature at the end of one of its sessions. It required parochial schools to teach every subject but three (religion, grammar and ethnic group history) in English. The Franco-American governor of Rhode Island, Emery San Souci, vetoed the bill, but not within the allowed time. It consequently became law.

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281 Lemaire, Hervé-B, "Franco-American Efforts on Behalf of the French Language in New England" from Giguère, Madeleine, ed., *A Franco-American Overview, Volume IV: New England*, (Cambridge MA: National Assessment and Dissemination Center for Bilingual/Bicultural Education, 1981), p. 37.

282 Bender, Steven W., "Impact of English Language Movement on Consumer Protection Regulation" from *Consumer Protection for Latinos: Overcoming Language Fraud and English-Only in the Marketplace*, 45 American University Law Review 1027-348, 1047-1054 (1996).

The Franco-American community lashed out and organized against these laws, often successfully. A secret society had been created in Rhode Island in 1920, known as "*L'Ordre des Croisés*" (the Order of the Crusaders), adopting the phrase "*Pour nos enfants*" ("for our children") as its call.<sup>283</sup> The membership of the organization included many prominent lawyers, doctors, and priests and its



goal was to fight for Franco-American rights and against language laws like the Peck Bill. Due to the nature of their society, the Croisés did not have the same organizing power within the Franco-American community as the two main Franco-American societies, the Union Saint Jean-Baptiste (USJB) and the American Canadian Association (ACA). That changed with the ascension of a Woonsocket

lawyer and prominent Croisé, Elphège Daignault, to the presidency of the ACA in 1922. His acceptance speech outlined his plan to use the society to better serve

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<sup>283</sup> Rumilly, Robert, *Histoire Des Franco-Américains*, p. 323.

the “race.”<sup>284</sup> The USJB, not to be outdone, also supported the fight against language laws. Eugène Jalbert of the USJB rallied a crowd of Franco-Americans by proclaiming “it’s for a country, it’s for a flag, it’s not for the use of a unique language that our soldiers went to kill in Europe.”<sup>285</sup> The USJB, however, increasingly disagreed with the methods of the Croisés and the ACA, which it viewed as anti-Catholic.

The Church also fought against these language laws, not because it was against assimilation of new immigrant groups, but because it saw the issue as an infringement of the separation between church and state that had protected its interests in America. Many of the laws placed requirements on parochial schools. If the Church allowed the state governments to interfere with Church affairs on the matter of language in schools without challenge, these same governments might come to believe that they had the right to interfere in all church matters.

The Church in New England was much more powerful than it had been just a few decades previously. It had supported some assimilation of immigrant groups in order to prevent critics from attacking the Church as anti-American. With the renewed strength of the Ku Klux Klan in America, and the support given to language laws by some of the more traditional American organizations

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284 “J’accepte ce poste parce que j’y vois une occasion de mieux servir la race...” (Ibid., p. 342).

285 “C’est pour un pays, c’est pour un drapeau, ce n’est pas pour l’usage d’une langue unique que nos soldats sont allés se faire tuer en Europe” (Ibid., p. 348).

like the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Church decided that it had to take a stand on these issues.<sup>286</sup> It was in a difficult position. Not only were American nationalists on the attack, but some of the new immigrant groups were also infuriated by the Church's assimilation policies.

### *The Sentinelle Affair*

The Sentinelle Affair stemmed from disputes between the Irish Catholic Church hierarchy centered in Providence Rhode Island and the Franco-American community of Woonsocket, Rhode Island, the hometown of the USJB. Angry with the assimilation and centralization policies of the Church, a newspaper called *La Sentinelle* was founded by a group of Franco-Americans in 1924.<sup>287</sup> Its goal was to attack the policies of Bishop Hickey of Providence. Albert Foisy, a French-Canadian migrant was its editor. Such newspapers were also appearing in Canada and France, most notably *L'Action Française*, which often took on a militant tone, featuring hatred of everything 'alien' to French language and culture.<sup>288</sup> By mid-year, Foisy had been replaced as editor of the *Sentinelle* by Daignault, the president of the ACA, and more militant members of the Franco-American population. Foisy in turn became editor of the moderate *La Tribune*.<sup>289</sup>

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286 Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*, p. 356-357.

287 Ibid., p. 179, 215.

288 Ibid., p. 53.

289 Ibid., p. 217.

The *Tribune* and the *Sentinelle* fought viciously throughout the twenties over the methods that should be used to maintain French survivance. The *Tribune* and the USJB argued that disputes with the Church should be mediated through Rome and that Daignault was dividing the race<sup>290</sup>, while the ACA and the *Sentinelle* argued that their methods were sound. In fact, each side accused the other of being race traitors.<sup>291</sup> The *Tribune* told its readers that they needed “to choose between God and Satan: ‘There is no middle.’”<sup>292</sup> By 1927, the *Tribune* had begun to view the conflict as the Catholic Church did- an attempt at schism. They exclaimed “Are you with Rome, are you against Rome? Choose!”<sup>293</sup> They even claimed that the Sentinelles were “Satanic Bolsheviks” and “Sacco-Vanzetti anarchists,” linking the ethnic group with the radical elements that had raised the suspicion of American nationalists in the first place.<sup>294</sup>

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290 Rumilly, Robert, *Histoire Des Franco-Américains*, p.404.

291 Ibid., p. 411 and Sorrell, Richard S, “The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929): Religious and Militant Survivance in Woonsocket, Rhode Island” from Giguère, Madeleine, ed., *A Franco-American Overview, Volume IV: New England*, (Cambridge MA: National Assessment and Dissemination Center for Bilingual/Bicultural Education, 1981), p. 177.

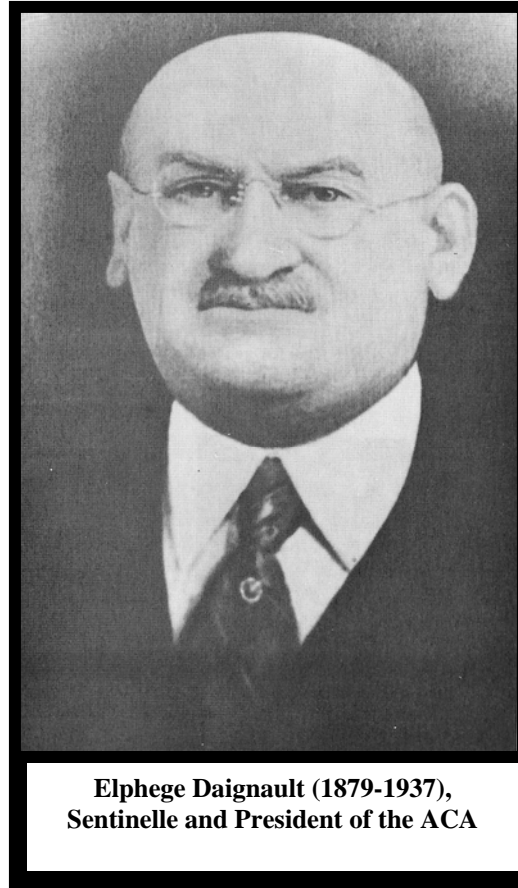
292 Rumilly, Robert, *Histoire Des Franco-Américains*, p. 414.

293 Ibid., p. 429.

294 Sorrell, Richard S, “The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929): Religious and Militant Survivance in Woonsocket, Rhode Island” from Giguère, Madeleine, ed., *A Franco-American Overview, Volume IV: New England*, (Cambridge MA: National Assessment and Dissemination Center for Bilingual/Bicultural Education, 1981), p. 177.



The increasing hostility of the Sentinelle Affair caught the attention of Church officials and representatives from Rome. The ACA continuously asked for support from the papal delegation in Washington, D.C., but received no response. Bishop Guertin of Manchester, New Hampshire, where the ACA was based, removed the Church's support for the organization as a Catholic institution.<sup>295</sup> Over the next three years, the ACA with Daignault at its head, increased its newspaper attacks against the Church hierarchy in New England, attempted to overthrow and take over the directing board of the USJB, and rallied communities throughout New England with anti-Irish speeches. Daignault and his compatriots saw the Irish as fallen Catholics who had lost their ethnicity and become Americanized. To




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295 Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*, p. 45.

Daignault, they were a greater threat to French survivance than American Protestants.<sup>296</sup>

In 1927, the ACA decided to bring civil suit against Bishop Hickey and the Providence Church in Rhode Island courts.<sup>297</sup> Their actions were surprisingly supported by the Ku Klux Klan, which had originally declared all Franco-Americans as papists. Senator Tom Heflin of Alabama, often associated with the Klan, addressed crowds in Rhode Island praising the Sentinelles and arguing that they had been condemned by a “foreign potentate” who was trying to take over the United States government.<sup>298</sup> Some French-language newspapers called Heflin “courageous,” while many English language papers began to label the Sentinelles as the “French K.K.K.” because of their use of “class and racial antagonisms.”<sup>299</sup> The court decided to take the case, but ruled against the Sentinelles.<sup>300</sup>

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296 See the writings of Elphège Daignault in Perreault, Robert B. *Elphège-J. Daignault et le Mouvement Sentinelliste à Manchester, New Hampshire*, (Bedford NH: National Materials Development Center for French and Creole, 1981).

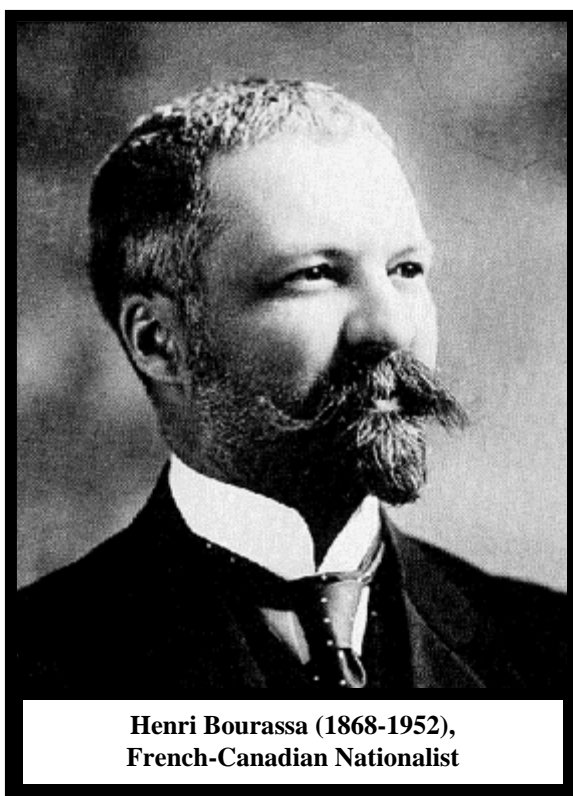
297 Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*, p. 232.

298 For more on the KKK see Ibid., p. 158-159.

299 There is no evidence that the group used physical violence to achieve its goals. Sorrell, Richard Sherman. Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*, p. 356-357.

300 Ibid., p. 241.

Meanwhile, Daignault had traveled to Rome to get support from the Pope. Upon his return to America in 1928, unsuccessful with his mission, he found that the Holy Father had ordered the excommunication of all who had signed the civil suit, the decision of the lower court having been upheld.<sup>301</sup> The *Sentinelle* was placed on the Index of forbidden works. Many of the Sentinelles remained



**Henri Bourassa (1868-1952),  
French-Canadian Nationalist**

defiant, creating new newspapers to replace the *Sentinelle*, all of which were placed on the Index when discovered. News of the excommunication spread quickly and was even covered in TIME Magazine,<sup>302</sup> causing support for the Sentinelles to dwindle quickly. Eventually, Daignault and almost all of the Sentinelles repented.

The affair signaled the end of the debate over the role of faith and language within Franco-American society. In fact, while Daignault had been organizing support for the *Sentinelle* cause, the president of the USJB, Elie Vézina, had been organizing support against the

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>302</sup> *Time Magazine*, Monday, Feb. 25, 1929. From <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,880497,00.html>

Sentinelles. He wrote continuously to Henri Bourassa<sup>303</sup>, the best-known leader of Québec nationalism. Bourassa, who was the great-grandson of Louis-Joseph Papineau, the man who had sparked the Rebellions of 1837, came out against the Sentinelles, condemning them in a set of articles written in 1929. A true French-Canadian nationalist, he remained loyal to the Church, traveling to Rome in 1926 in order to argue that “the principal obstacle to papal action and of the Church in the world, is the predominance of racial passions in every country, the substitution of nationalism for Catholicism.”<sup>304</sup> He also supported Vézina’s attempts to inform papal advisers that the Franco-American priests largely supported the Sentinelles over the Church hierarchy and that such a development was a dangerous challenge to the Pope’s authority. Such condemnations essentially killed the movement for most French-Canadians and Franco-Americans. While the affair had much support in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, it faced hostility from the city where the ACA had been founded: Manchester, New Hampshire.

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303 For more on Henri Bourassa, see Plaw, Avery, “Henri Bourassa as a Neglected Father of Canadian Nationalism”, Conference Paper, Canada from 1900 to 1950: A Country Comes of Age, 3-4 October 2002, Montréal, Québec. From [http://www.orchistcanada.ca/files/conference\\_papers/2002/5c-Plaw-mar03.pdf](http://www.orchistcanada.ca/files/conference_papers/2002/5c-Plaw-mar03.pdf)

304 “Le principal obstacle à l’action de la Papauté et de l’Eglise dans le monde, c’est la predominance des passions de race dans tous les pays, c’est la substitution du nationalisme au catholicisme...” (Rumilly, Robert, *Histoire des Franco-Américains*, p. 397).

*Manchester's Sentinelles*

During the twenties, New Hampshire's Catholic population rose to over one hundred and fifty thousand. Over twenty-two thousand children attended the diocese's fifteen high schools. (15,000 attended bilingual schools in Manchester where French was taught half the day). These schools would now be teaching predominantly in English. Even so, the Boston Daily Advertiser had no problem running an anti-parochial school (i.e. anti-Catholic) tirade against Manchester's hierarchy, writing that "The Catholic church runs things in this city (Manchester). The parochial school system should be done away with. There should be a separation of Church and State. That means the parochial school system should go and go in a hurry."<sup>305</sup>

The diocese's support for assimilation policies roused the ire of the ACA and the Sentinelles. On 8 January 1925, Bishop Guertin wrote the priests who served the ACA stating that "The ACA has adopted a reprehensible attitude. It has displayed a total contempt of religious authority, a strange liberty of thought and action, in a shamelessness and violence of language that have caused deep unrest and a resounding scandal..."<sup>306</sup> He demanded that the board of directors repent and fall in line with Church doctrine and the Church hierarchy. The board, in turn, asked for discussion of the matter, but Guertin refused. By 16

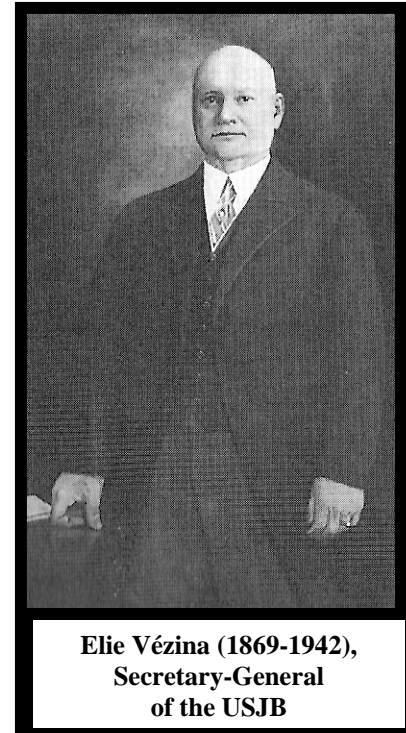
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<sup>305</sup> Robert, Adolphe, *Memorial Des Actes de L'Association Canado-Americaine*, (Manchester NH: L'Avenir National, 1946), p. 214.

<sup>306</sup> *Saint Anthony of Padua/Saint Antoine de Padoue, 1899-1999*, (Manchester, NH, 2000), p. 45.

January, the ACA replied that it was going to consult the papal delegate in Washington D.C. before making a decision. Guertin removed the society's chaplains, Father Doucet and Father Beaudé, both Franco-American priests from Saint Anthony of Padua, a Franco-American national parish in Manchester.<sup>307</sup> Father Beaudé responded by founding the League for French Rallying in America and enrolling almost all of the priests in New Hampshire and Rhode Island. The purpose of the League, like the Croisés, was to fight Americanization.<sup>308</sup>

Daignault began attacking the diocese of Manchester in local French newspapers,



**Elie Vézina (1869-1942),  
Secretary-General  
of the USJB**

specifically *L'Avenir National*, in which he wrote editorials signed under the pseudonym Blaise Juillet.<sup>309</sup> The newspaper had supported the cause of the French language, writing one piece in which it "reiterated the scriptural story of the first Pentecost, when the Apostles were heard by men of all races and languages. 'The constant Church doctrine teaches that the Gospel shall be

307 Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*, p. 45.

308 *Saint Anthony of Padua/Saint Antoine de Padoue, 1899-1999*, p. 41.

309 See the writings of Elphège Daignault in Perreault, Robert B. *Elphège-J. Daignault et le Mouvement Sentinelliste à Manchester, New Hampshire*, (Bedford NH: National Materials Development Center for French and Creole, 1981).

preached to all people, following the example of the Apostles, in the language native to each people. From this doctrine, it is clear that, in this English-speaking country, we have a right to practice our faith in French, but should the situation arise, it is not up to the faithful to learn the language of the pastor, but up to the pastor to learn the language of the faithful.”<sup>310</sup> With the death of its editor, however, *L’Avenir National* began to criticize the Sentinelles.

Daignault continued to attack Guertin and many Franco-Americans in the city using his own *Sentinelle* paper. Guertin had named an Irishman who knew the French language well, father Thomas Joseph Ernest Devoy, as the pastor of Saint Georges in 1914 and Daignault used this appointment to link Guertin to the Irish hierarchy, charging him with “violating the letter and the spirit of the laws of the Church” in naming such a man.<sup>311</sup> He compared Guertin with revolutionary France, an enemy of French-Canadian nationalists due to its support of de-Christianization, by arguing that Guertin’s attempts at denationalization would lead to Franco-American de-Christianization.<sup>312</sup> Throughout 1926, the *Sentinelle* continued to attack Guertin. He was sarcastically labeled “Mgr O’Guertin”<sup>313</sup>, a strike at his support of the Irish-American

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310 *Saint Anthony of Padua/Saint Antoine de Padoue, 1899-1999*, p. 44.

311 Perreault, Robert B. *Elphège-J. Daignault et le Mouvement Sentinelliste à Manchester, New Hampshire*, p. 13.

312 See the writings of Elphège Daignault in Perreault, Robert B. *Elphège-J. Daignault et le Mouvement Sentinelliste à Manchester, New Hampshire*, (Bedford NH: National Materials Development Center for French and Creole, 1981).

313 Rumilly, Robert, *Histoire des Franco-Américains*, p. 388.

hierarchy. Daignault accused Devoy of defrancophonizing the nunneries and used French fables to describe Devoy as a wolf in sheep's clothing.<sup>314</sup> Daignault even attacked *L'Avenir National* for its hostile stance toward the Sentinelles. Such attacks forced many within the Franco-American community in Manchester to respond in anger. In response, Bishop Guertin clearly showed his support for the USJB over the more militant policies of the ACA.<sup>315</sup> In December, Guertin and his assimilationist compatriots, including Wilfred Lessard, were summoned to Rome to be given honors for their Catholic work.

Many of the Franco-American clergy members of Manchester supported the Sentinelles, whether publicly or privately. Other Catholic ethnic groups, however, viewed Guertin as a protector of their interests.<sup>316</sup> In 1927, he removed two priests in Somersworth, New Hampshire who had shown much support for the Sentinelles, one of whom was the son of a former Franco-American mayor of Manchester.<sup>317</sup>

Did such in-fighting weaken the Franco-American community? It is apparent that it did weaken the resolve for survivance. The USJB's membership suffered in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Québec due to its anti-Sentinelle stance; the ACA's membership did not increase much; the *Fédération Catholique*

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314 From La Fontaine's fables. Perreault, Robert B. *Elphège-J. Daignault et le Mouvement Sentinelliste à Manchester, New Hampshire*, p. 42.

315 Ibid., p. 418.

316 Ibid., p. 391.

317 Ibid., p. 424.



*Franco-Américaine* was destroyed; the circulation of French-language newspapers decreased; and some Franco-Americans left the Catholic Church.<sup>318</sup> The entire event also substantiated Protestant American claims that foreign groups were schismatic and anarchistic revolutionaries who had no desire to become Americans. They believed that Franco-Americans would squabble over class, racial, and religious issues. Because they did not appear to desire to become American, they posed a threat to American society.<sup>319</sup>

It is clear, however, that others remained defiant. These individuals counted the Sentinelle affair as a loss, but had not given up the fight to maintain both their language and their faith. Some of Daignault's followers fled to Manchester in the thirties, starting a paper called *Le Travailleur*, which was supported by many members of the clergy and continued to espouse Sentinelle ideals.<sup>320</sup> Bishop Guertin died in 1932, but the ACA and the diocese did not reunite until 1936 when Daignault was forced to resign the presidency.

Just as the French-Canadian linkage of faith and language did not translate in New England, neither did Daignault's message of an overarching Irish hierarchy's plot to overthrow Franco-American society and culture translate in Manchester's Franco-American community. Manchester's Catholic leader was

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318 Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*, p. 362-370.

319 Ibid., p. 350.

320 Ibid., p. 49.

a Franco-American; its mayor was Franco-American; much of its population was Franco-American and loyal to the Church. While much of the Franco-American priesthood did support the Sentinelles in private, the majority of the population was more interested in remaining loyal to their compatriot, the bishop. The most widely read French paper's stance against the Sentinelles also served to sway the population. Although some businesses and individuals from the city donated to souvenir-booklets published to commemorate the events<sup>321</sup>, most of the city's population worked in the mill yard and were more interested in providing for their families than becoming involved in a dispute that they were being told was not legitimate. The combination of a strong hierarchy headed by a Franco-American and the support it received from local information sources like *L'Avenir National*, prevented the Sentinelles from gaining a foothold in the location of their headquarters. The idea that faith supercedes language emerged victorious.

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321 Sorrell, Richard Sherman, *The Sentinelle Affair (1924-1929) and militant Survivance: the Franco-American experience in Woonsocket, Rhode Island*, p. 396.

## *Conclusion*

### **Ethnic Identity Erosion: The Interwar Years and Today**

#### *Ethnic Identity Erosion*

In this thesis, I have shown that the French-Canadian ethnic identity of the original immigrant population that traveled to New England was eroding rapidly during the interwar period. Observations that traditional Franco-American kinship ties were threatened by new scientific industrial practices like Fordism and Taylorism as well as the squabbles over language and faith during the Sentinelle Affair point to a community in flux.<sup>322</sup> Franco-American identity began to fragment long before suburbanization after World War II. Suburbanization simply signaled the end of the long process of identity erosion that had begun decades before.

Manchester's Franco-American population continued to produce individuals who fit the conservative image of Franco-American identity, like René Gagnon who helped raise the flag at Iwo Jima. But it also produced individuals who went against this stereotypical image, namely Grace Metalious, the author of *Peyton Place*.

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<sup>322</sup> These observations were first made by Professors Tamara Hareven and Richard Sorrell.

The fact that identity erosion took place is not to say that all Franco-Americans lost their ties to Franco-American identity. It means that, although many families continue to speak French with older members of the population and attend Roman Catholic Church services every weekend, their public visibility and their group organizing power have been greatly diminished.

*Language and White Ethnic Group Racialization*

Racialization of white ethnic groups, as a process, was not and is not confined to the United States of America. This thesis sheds light on the similarities between Canada under British rule and the United States with regard to their views of non-Anglo-Saxon groups.

Racialization through the immigration process to America is also not confined to the past. Race is still a major issue in today's immigration debates. During my time at the Lutheran Social Services of Northern New England's Interfaith Refugee Resettlement Center, I met a woman who had escaped the war in Bosnia. In her new home, the quaint town of Laconia, New Hampshire, she told me about her encounters with the Americans who now lived and worked with her. She was surprised that, after so many years living among them, some of her American friends were still praising her intelligence in public, as if they were shocked that she was actually an intelligent woman. She had college degrees from her country of origin and had been a teacher before fleeing her

home, so anyone who knew her story should not have been surprised by her intellect.

This woman appears white, but her speech reveals a slight accent. It is interesting that language still seems to be tied, somehow, into the creation of “the other” in America. While most people would probably agree that she is white, her language helps differentiate her from the English-speaking majority population of her town. The Franco-Americans who arrived in the late nineteenth-century were stigmatized in the same way. I would suggest that even when outward appearances do not cause social differentiation, a hierarchy of language, with English as the dominant language, continues to function in many English-speaking societies today. Those who have mastered the English language are viewed as intelligent and deserving, while those who were not raised with that language or who speak English with an accent are stigmatized or subordinated. One need only look at the French view of French-Canadian dialects to see that this English-language hierarchy is altered (with French at the top), yet functioning, throughout the world.

*Whiteness and Blackness: Power Relations in Québec and New England*

While it is interesting to look at the effects of identity erosion within the Franco-American community of Manchester, it is even more fascinating when the picture is broadened to include changes that have taken place in Québec. The

conservative three-fold identity of faith, language, and custom has also eroded in that community.

As white ethnic groups in America, including the Franco-Americans of Manchester, were grappling to rediscover their identities in the seventies, the French-Canadian terrorist group, *Front de Libération du Québec* or *FLQ*, was demanding revolution and kidnapping government and foreign officials. In 1970, they went so far as to murder Pierre Laporte, the Vice-Premier of Québec.

The earlier racialization of the French-Canadian population remained salient within this group. Pierre Vallières, the intellectual leader of the FLQ, wrote a book entitled *Nègres Blancs d'Amérique* (*White Niggers of America*) in 1968. In it, Vallières compared the struggle of French-Canadians in Québec with the African-American Civil Rights Movement of America.<sup>323</sup>

Vallière points to the connections between “race” and class status by acknowledging the subordinate position of other ethnic groups when he states that “while it is no exaggeration to call the people of Quebec white niggers, they are not the only whites in America who ‘deserve’ this degrading title...the majority of immigrants have remained the hired servants of the ‘first white men’...the Washingtons, Jeffersons, and Franklins...[T]here was a ‘melting pot’ at the level of the wage earners, the unemployed, the poor, those who struggled

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<sup>323</sup> Vallières, Pierre, Joan Pinkham, trans., *White Niggers of America: The Precocious Autobiography of a Quebec “Terrorist,”* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p.21.

to survive. But there was never a 'melting pot' at the level of the American aristocracy, the class of the big bourgeoisie, the financiers and professional imperialists."<sup>324</sup>

His calls for revolution show a recognition that blackness is not just a physical trait: "These niggers- who do not all have the same color skin, who do not all speak the same language, who believe in different prophets, live in ghettos that are foreign to each other and experience in different ways the dictatorship of the same economic, political, and social system- all these niggers whom the partisans of slavery, the businessmen, and the politicians have for centuries contrived to set against each other (the better to exploit them and keep them powerless), know today that in this world of money, violence, and oppression, freedom and peace can be won only by the strength of numbers and of arms."<sup>325</sup> These writings show that, while the Franco-Americans of New England became progressively whiter, some French-Canadians in Québec began to associate their own identities with "blackness".

*Significance: A Note of Caution on the Immigration Debate*

This thesis has shown that environment plays a significant role in the development and maintenance of group identity. Based on the findings

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<sup>324</sup> Ibid., p. 49-50.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., p. 52-53.

contained herein, I would caution those who point to the experiences of earlier immigrant generations, like the Irish or French-Canadians, as a complete template for immigration and assimilation. The environment in which these groups' identities transformed was completely different from the one that now faces the post- 1965 immigrants.<sup>326</sup> One need only look at the key players in the erosion of Franco-American identity, like the Roman Catholic Church, to see how American society today has changed from this earlier time. In contrast to the Catholic Churches that forced assimilation during the Sentinelle Affair, some Catholic Churches are now granting asylum to immigrants who arrived in the United States illegally and fear deportation.

This caution is not meant to say that the post-1965 immigrants will not face similar challenges to those experienced by earlier generations. Their identities will undoubtedly adapt to a new environment as well. I would advocate comparisons between historical and contemporary processes, both social and institutional, which made and continue to make adaptation to American life difficult, but would also urge for a more realistic appraisal of the state of immigration in American society today.

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<sup>326</sup> I am referring to immigrants who have arrived since the passage of the United States Immigration Act of 1965.



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